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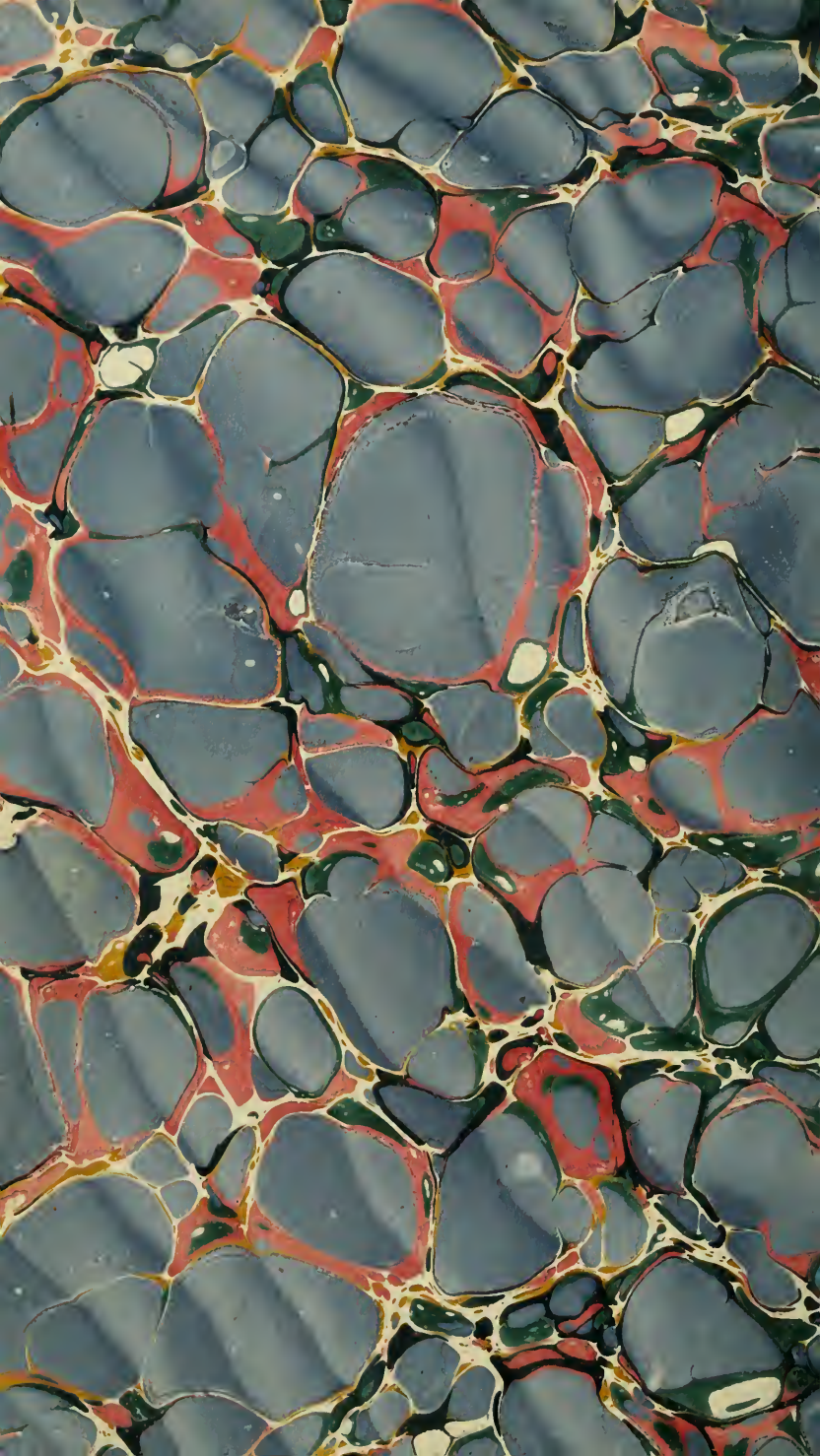

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THE

WRITINGS

OF THE LATE

JOHN M. MASON, D.D.

CONSISTING OF

SERMONS, ESSAYS, AND MISCELLANIES,

INCLUDING ESSAYS ALREADY PUBLISHED IN THE "CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE."

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY

REV. EBENEZER MASON

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

The public character of the late Dr. Mason has made the publication of some of his writings desirable to his friends, and due to the community. The task of collecting together and selecting from them materials for publication, assigned to me by the family, was undertaken from a sense of duty, and has been discharged according to the ability possessed. The result is submitted to the public in these volumes.

Those who knew the author as a public man, and were not acquainted with his situation and engagements, may be surprised to learn that the materials for publication were so scanty. It is much to be regretted that one who was so pre-eminent in his day should leave so few manu-

scripts. Dr. Mason's life was emphatically devoted to the *active* discharge of duties in religion and literature. The pressure of his public services soon compelled him to lay aside his pen; and, sustained by a vigorous mind, and guided by firmly settled principles, he filled up his time in enlarging his sphere of active labor, and urging to still further exertion his mental powers. For at one period, the charge of a new congregation—the responsibility of a literary institution, and the whole weight of an infant and struggling theological seminary—together with all the engagements of a public man—rested upon his shoulders, and were sustained by him. Is it surprising that he wrote so little? Uniting in himself talents of the highest order as an extemporaneous speaker, he was freed from the necessity of writing for daily purposes, and he never did write when he could avoid it. Hence, from the year 1796, four years after his settlement in the ministry, until 1821, a space of twenty-five years in the vigor of life, not a sermon, not an essay, even in an unfinished state, excepting what has been already published, has been discovered. In 1821 ill health compelled him to write his sermons for the pul-

pit, and read them The sermons, therefore, excepting those republished and indicated by their titles, are limited to the early and late periods of his ministry. They are not, however, printed in the order of their composition, but as appeared desirable. Some of his later sermons were loaned at the urgent request of friendship, but have never since been returned. Especially sermons on John iii. 3, and 2 Cor. vi. 2.

From his sermons thus confined to the extremes of his public life, his theological opinions are easily discovered; and how he brought the gospel of grace to bear upon the consciences of men as responsible beings, may be as readily seen in these sermons as it might be attested by those who heard him. No man thought more independently, or was more in the uniform habit of personally investigating his subjects and deciding for himself.

A hope was indulged that outlines of his lectures upon different continued portions of the Bible, delivered to his congregation and to his students, might be found among his papers. His exhibitions of divine truth in this form were most impressive and instructive. Nothing, however, remains behind which would indicate he

had ever lectured upon the Psalms, the Gospels, the Acts, Romans, Hebrews, and other epistles. During his life, he gave a partial promise that he would write out some lectures upon the epistle to the Romans; but ill health forbade the redemption of that pledge. And it is well known that when applied to furnish for publication several discourses upon family instruction, delivered while preaching in the late Dr. Romeyn's church, in 1810, he replied, "I cannot give them, for I have them not."

The Essays upon Episcopacy, commencing the third volume, are already well known. Previous to Dr. Mason's decease, he had been frequently solicited by letters from different parts of the United States to permit their republication, and had finally consented; not from any desire to renew that controversy, but because the same high "jure divino" pretensions, which induced him to write his review, were again preferred, to the disquietude of many distant communities and churches. And as an additional reason, the articles reviewed have since been collected and republished.

The Essays upon the Church of God, commencing the fourth volume, are well known

and highly appreciated. Recently, the synod of New York, of the Presbyterian church, appointed a committee to make selections from these essays, in reference to the relation of baptized children to the church, for general distribution. These Essays, and the Review upon Episcopacy, have been stereotyped, so that any demands for either series can be speedily, and at a moderate cost, supplied. And it is believed that a general circulation of the church essays especially, would be very serviceable in the present state of the Presbyterian and the Congregational churches.

At first it was intended to publish only extracts from the "Letters upon frequent Communion," as the special reasons which called for them had nearly ceased, and were not likely to regain their influence; but upon more minute examination, it was found impracticable to make such a selection without mutilation or obscurity, so that either all or none must be printed. The whole, with the exception of the sixth letter of the series, is presented as forming an important item in the history of the American churches, and as exhibiting the resolution and energy of their writer in his early ministry, in denouncing

and effectually removing an onerous and unnecessary practice of will worship, which custom had raised to the importance of a divine institute, and in some cases above it; but more especially as containing suggestions and principles well worthy of the consideration of men now influencing religious assemblies, and directing the devotion and practice of the church in reference to this very ordinance.

The "Plea for sacramental Communion upon catholic Principles," first published in 1816, and republished in London in 1817, forms no part of the present collection. Through inadvertence upon the part of the publisher, its conditional republication was not stated upon his prospectus, and the subscription had too far advanced to rectify the omission when discovered. It would have swelled the work another volume, perhaps unnecessarily, as a few copies of the first edition may yet be obtained.

Possibly the public may be surprised at not finding a life of Dr. Mason accompanying these volumes, as a general opinion is prevailing that the editor was preparing a life of his father. This is an entire mistake. He never designed such a work. He has been only engaged in collecting materials within his reach for some other

and abler pen. This was all he intended. Though unforeseen difficulties have arisen to delay and prevent the preparation of a memoir, the idea is not yet wholly abandoned; and it is deemed inexpedient to prefix any sketch to these volumes. When definite arrangements are made, the public will be duly informed.

As near two years have elapsed since the proposals were issued, some explanation for the delay is due. It is soon given. Eighteen months ago the papers were in the printers' hands; but severe and long-continued indisposition befalling first myself and then a brother, who superintended the press during my absence from the city, compelled the printers to enter into other engagements, which could not be abandoned at a moment's call. The work is now finished, and committed to the Christian community. I only lay claim to good intentions, and fidelity to my trust according to my ability; and add a fervent prayer that the contents of these volumes may advance the great interests of truth, (the sole objects their author had in view,) and be owned for that end by the Great Head of the church.

EBENEZER MASON.

New York, Feb. 22, 1832.

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you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And, now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 343

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SERMON I.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE POOR.

LUKE VII. 22.

To the Poor the Gospel is preached.

The Old Testament closes with a remarkable prediction concerning Messiah and his forerunner. *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* Accordingly, at the appointed time, came John the Baptist, *in the spirit and power of Elias*, saying, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* In his great work of *preparing the way of the Lord*, he challenged sin without respect of persons. The attempt was hazardous; but, feeling the majesty of his cha-

racter, he was not to be moved by considerations which divert or intimidate the ordinary man. Name, sect, station, were alike to him. Not even the imperial purple, when it harbored a crime, afforded protection from his rebuke. His fidelity in this point cost him his life. For having *reproved Herod, for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done*, he was thrown into prison, and at length sacrificed to the most implacable of all resentments, the resentment of an abandoned woman.

It was in the interval between his arrest and execution, that he sent to Jesus the message on which my text is grounded. As his office gave him no security against the workings of unbelief in the hour of temptation, it is not strange, if, in a dungeon and in chains, his mind was invaded by an occasional doubt. The question by two of his disciples, *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* has all the air of an inquiry for personal satisfaction; and so his Lord's reply seems to treat it. *Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.* The answer is clear and convincing. It enumerates the very signs by which the church was to know her God, *for whom she had waited;* and they were enough to

remove the suspicions, and confirm the soul, of his servant John.

Admitting that Jesus Christ actually wrought the works here ascribed to him, every sober man will conclude with Nicodemus, *We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* It is not, however, my intention to dwell on the miraculous evidence of Christianity. The article, which I select as exhibiting it in a plain but interesting view, is, THE PREACHING OF GOSPEL TO THE POOR.

In scriptural language, "the poor," who are most exposed to suffering and least able to encounter it, represent all who are destitute of good necessary to their perfection and happiness; especially those who feel their want, and are disconsolate; especially those who are anxiously *waiting for the consolation of Israel.* Thus in Ps. xl. 17: *I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.* Thus in Is. xli. 17: *When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.* Thus also, ch. lxi. 1: *The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the* MEEK; the same word with that rendered "poor;" and so it is translated by Luke, ch. iv. 18, *to preach the gospel to the* POOR; which is connected, both

in the prophet and evangelist, with *healing the* BROKEN-HEARTED. Our Lord, therefore, refers John, as he did the Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth, to this very prediction as fulfilled in himself. So that his own definition of his own religion is, *a system of consolation for the wretched.* This is so far from excluding the *literal poor*, that the success of the gospel with them is the pledge of its success with all others: for they not only form the majority of the human race, but they also bear the chief burden of its calamities. Moreover, as the sources of pleasure and pain are substantially the same in all men; and as affliction, by suspending the influence of their artificial distinctions, reduces them to the level of their common nature; whatever, by appealing to the principles of that nature, promotes the happiness of the multitude, must equally promote the happiness of the residue; and whatever consoles the one, must, in like circumstances, console the other also. As we cannot, therefore, maintain the suitableness of the gospel to the literal poor, who are the mass of mankind, without maintaining its prerogative of comforting the afflicted; nor, on the contrary, its prerogative of comforting, separately from its suitableness to the mass of mankind, I shall consider these two ideas as involving each other.

With this explanation, the first thing which demands your notice, is the FACT ITSELF—GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE POOR.

From the remotest antiquity there have been, in all civilized nations, men who devoted themselves to the increase of knowledge and happiness. Their speculations were subtle, their arguings acute, and many of their maxims respectable. But to whom were their instructions addressed? To casual visitors, to selected friends, to admiring pupils, to privileged orders! In some countries, and on certain occasions, when vanity was to be gratified by the acquisition of fame, their appearances were more public. For example, one read a poem, another a history, and a third a play, before the crowd assembled at the Olympic games. To be crowned there, was, in the proudest period of Greece, the summit of glory and ambition. But what did this, what did the mysteries of pagan worship, or what the lectures of pagan philosophy, avail the *people?* Sunk in ignorance, in poverty, in crime, they lay neglected. Age succeeded to age, and school to school; a thousand sects and systems rose, flourished, and fell; but the degradation of the multitude remained. Not a beam of light found its way into their darkness, nor a drop of consolation into their cup. Indeed a plan for raising them to the dignity of rational enjoyment, and

fortifying them against the disasters of life, was not to be expected: for as nothing can exceed the contempt in which they were held by the professors of wisdom; so any human device, however captivating in theory, would have been worthless in fact. The most sagacious heathen could imagine no better means of improving them than the precepts of his philosophy. Now, supposing it to be ever so salutary, its benefits must have been confined to a very few; the notion that the bulk of mankind may become philosophers, being altogether extravagant. They ever have been, and, in the nature of things, ever must be, unlearned. Besides, the groveling superstition and brutal manners of the heathen, presented insuperable obstacles. Had the plan of their cultivation been even suggested, especially if it comprehended the more abject of the species, it would have been universally derided, and would have merited derision, no less than the dreams of modern folly about the perfectibility of man.

Under this incapacity of *instructing* the poor, how would the pagan sage have acquitted himself as their *comforter*? His dogmas, during prosperity and health, might humor his fancy, might flatter his pride, or dupe his understanding; but against the hour of grief or dissolution he had no solace for himself, and could have none for others. I am not to be persuaded, in

contradiction to every principle of my animal and rational being, that pain, and misfortune, and death, are no evils; and are beneath a wise man's regard. And could I work myself up into so absurd a conviction, how would it promote my comfort? Comfort is essentially consistent with nature and truth. By perverting my judgment, by hardening my heart, by chilling my nobler warmth, and stifling my best affections, I may grow stupid; but shall be far enough from consolation. Convert me into a beast, and I shall be without remorse; into a block, and I shall feel no pain. But this was not my request. I asked you for consolation, and you destroy my ability to receive it. I asked you to bear me over death, in the fellowship of immortals, and you begin by transforming me into a monster! Here are no glad tidings: nothing to cheer the gloom of outward or inward poverty. And the pagan teacher could give no better. From him, therefore, the miserable, even of his own country, and class, and kindred, had nothing to hope. But to *lift the needy from the dunghill*, and wipe away the tears from the mourner; to lighten the burdens of the heart; to heal its maladies, repair its losses, and enlarge its enjoyments; and that under every form of penury and sorrow, in all nations, and ages, and circumstances; as it is a scheme too vast for the human faculties, so,

had it been committed to merely human execution, it could not have proceeded a single step, and would have been remembered only as a frantic reverie.

Yet all this hath Christianity undertaken. Her voice is, without distinction, to people of every color, and clime, and condition: to the continent and the isles; to the man of the city, the man of the field, and the man of the woods; to the Moor, the Hindoo, and the Hottentot; to the sick and desperate; to the beggar, the convict, and the slave. She impairs no faculty, interdicts no affection, infringes no relation; but, taking men as they are, with all their depravity and woes, she proffers them peace and blessedness. Her boasting is not vain. The course of experiment has lasted through more than fifty generations of men. It is passing every hour before our eyes; and, for reasons to be afterwards assigned, has never failed, in a single instance, when it has been fairly tried.

The design is stupendous; and the least success induces us to inquire, by whom it was projected and carried into effect. And what is our astonishment, when we learn, that it was by men of obscure birth, mean education, and feeble resource: by men from a nation hated for their religion, and proverbial for their moroseness; by carpenters, and tax-gatherers, and fishermen of

Judea! What shall we say of this phenomenon? A recurrence to the Jewish scriptures, which had long predicted it, either surrenders the argument, or increases the difficulty. If you admit that they reveal futurity, you recognize the finger of God, and the controversy is at an end. If you call them mere conjectures, you are still to account for their correspondence with the event, and to explain how a great system of benevolence, unheard, unthought of by learned antiquity, came to be cherished, to be transmited for centuries from father to son, and at length attempted, among the *Jews!* And you are also contradicted by the fact, that however clearly such a system is marked out in their scriptures, they were so far from adopting it, that they entirely mistook it; rejected it, nationally, with disdain; persecuted unto death those who embarked in it; and have not embraced it to this day! Yet in the midst of this bigoted and obstinate people, sprang up the deliverance of the human race. *Salvation is of the Jews.* Within half a century after the resurrection of Christ, his disciples had penetrated to the extremes of the Roman empire, and had carried the *day-spring from on high* to innumerable tribes who were *sitting in the region and shadow of death.* And so exclusively *Christian* is this plan, so remote from the sphere of common effort, that after

it has been proposed and executed, men revert perpetually to their wonted littleness and carelessness. The whole face of Christendom is overspread with proofs, that, in proportion as they depart from the simplicity of the gospel, they forget the multitude as before, and the doctrines of consolation expire. In so far, too, as they adapt to their own notions of propriety, the general idea, which they have borrowed from the gospel, of meliorating the condition of their species, they have produced, and are every day producing, effects the very reverse of their professions. Discontent, and confusion, and crimes, they propagate in abundance. They have smitten the earth with curses, and deluged it with blood; but the instance is yet to be discovered, in which they have *bound up the broken-hearted.* The *fact*, therefore, that Christianity is, in the broadest sense of the terms, *glad tidings to the poor*, is perfectly original. It stands without rival or comparison. It has no foundation in the principles of human enterprise; and could never have existed without the inspiration of that *Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift.*

II. As the Christian FACT is original, so the REASONS OF ITS EFFICACY ARE PECULIAR. Christianity can afford consolation, because *it is fitted*

to our nature and character. I specify particulars:

First. The gospel proceeds upon the principle of *immortality.*

That our bodies shall die is indisputable. But that reluctance of nature, that panting after life, that horror of annihilation, of which no man can completely divest himself, connect the death of the body with deep solicitude. While neither these, nor any other merely rational considerations, ascertain the certainty of future being; much less of future bliss. The feeble light which glimmered around this point among the heathen, flowed not from investigation, but tradition. It was to be seen chiefly among the vulgar, who inherited the tales of their fathers; and among the poets, who preferred popular fable to philosophic speculation. Reason would have pursued her discovery; but the pagans knew not how to apply the notion of immortality, even when they had it. It governed not their precepts; it established not their hope. When they attempted to discuss the grounds of it, *they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.* The best arguments of Socrates are unworthy of a child, who has *learned the holy scriptures.* And it is remarkable enough, that the doctrine of immortality is as perfectly detached, and as barren of moral effect, in the

hands of modern infidels, as it was in the hands of the ancient pagans. They have been so unable to assign it a convenient place in their system; they have found it to be so much at variance with their habits, and so troublesome in their warfare with the scriptures, that the more resolute of the sect have discarded it altogether. With the soberer part of them it is no better than an opinion; but it never was, and never will be a source of true consolation, in any system or any bosom, but the system of Christianity and the bosom of the Christian. *Life and immortality*, about which some have guessed; for which all have sighed; but of which none could trace the relations, or prove the existence; are not merely hinted, they *are brought to light by the gospel.* This is the parting point with every other religion; and yet the very point upon which our happiness hangs. That we shall survive the body, and pass from its dissolution to the bar of God, and from the bar of God to endless retribution, are truths of infinite moment, and of pure revelation. They demonstrate the incapacity of temporal things to content the soul. They explain why grandeur, and pleasure, and fame, leave the heart sad. He who pretends to be my comforter without consulting my immortality, overlooks my essential want. The gospel supplies it. Immortality is the basis of her

fabric. She resolves the importance of man into its true reason—the *value of his soul.* She sees under every human form, however rugged or abused, a spirit unalterable by external change, unassailable by death, and endued with stupendous faculties of knowledge and action, of enjoyment and suffering; a spirit, at the same time, depraved and guilty; and therefore liable to irreparable ruin. These are Christian views. They elevate us to a height, at which the puny theories of the world stand and gaze. They stamp new interest on all my relations, and all my acts. They hold up before me objects vast as my wishes, terrible as my fears, and permanent as my being. They bind me to eternity.

Secondly. Having thus unfolded the general doctrine of immortality, the gospel advances further, informing us, that although a future life is sure, *future blessedness is by no means a matter of course.* This receives instant confirmation from a review of our character as *sinners.*

None but an atheist, or, which is the same thing, a madman, will deny the existence of moral obligation, and the sanction of moral law. In other words, that it is our duty to obey God, and that he has annexed penalties to disobedience. As little can it be denied, that we have actually disobeyed him. Guilt has taken up its abode in the conscience, and indicates, by signs not to be

misunderstood, both its presence and power. To call this superstition, betrays only that vanity, which thinks to confute a doctrine by giving it an ill name. Depravity and its consequences meet us, at every moment, in a thousand shapes; nor is there an individual breathing, who has escaped its taint. Therefore our relations to our Creator as innocent creatures have ceased; and are succeeded by the relation of rebels against his government. In no other light can he contemplate us, because his *judgment is according to truth.* A conviction of this begets alarm and wretchedness. And, whatever some may pretend, a guilty conscience is the secret worm, which preys upon the vitals of human peace: the invisible spell, which turns the draught of pleasure into wormwood and gall. To laugh at it as an imaginary evil, is the mark of a fool: for what can be more rational than to tremble at the displeasure of an almighty God. If, then, I ask how I am to be delivered? or whether deliverance is possible? human reason is dumb: or if she open her lips, it is only to teaze me with conjectures, which evince that she knows nothing of the matter. Here the Christian verity interferes; showing me, on the one hand, that my alarm is well founded; that my demerit and danger are far beyond even my own suspicions; that God, with whom I have to do, *will by no means clear the*

guilty; but, on the other hand, revealing the provision of his infinite wisdom and grace, for releasing me from guilt. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* The more I ponder this method of salvation, the more I am convinced that it displays the divine perfection, and exalts the divine government; so that *it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* Now I know where to obtain the first requisite to happiness, pardon of sin. In Christ Jesus, the Lord, is that justifying righteousness, the want of which, though I was ignorant of the cause, kept me miserable till this hour. I cling to it, and am safe. His precious blood *purges my conscience.* It *extends peace to me as a river, and the glory of redemption like a flowing stream.* My worst fears are dispelled: *the wrath to come* is not for me; I can look with composure at futurity, and feel joy springing up with the thought that I am immortal.

Thirdly. In addition to deliverance from wrath, Christianity provides relief against the *plague of the heart.*

It will not be contested, that disorder reigns among the passions of men. The very attempts

to rectify it are a sufficient concession; and their ill success shows their authors to have been *physicians of no value.* That particular ebullitions of passion have been repressed, and particular habits of vice overcome, without Christian aid, is admitted. But if any one shall conclude, that these are examples of victory over the *principle* of depravity, he will greatly err. For, not to insist that the experience of the world is against him, we have complete evidence, that all reformations, not evangelical, are merely an exchange of lusts; or rather, the elevation of one evil appetite by the depression of another; the *strength* of depravity continuing the same; its *form* only varied. Nor can it be otherwise. Untaught of God, the most comprehensive genius is unable either to trace the original of corruption, or to check its force. It has its fountain where he least and last believes it to be; but where the omniscient eye has searched it out; in the human heart; the heart, filled with *enmity against God* —the heart, *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.* "But, the discovery being made, his measures, you hope, will take surer effect." Quite the contrary. It now defies his power, as it formerly did his wisdom. How have disciples of the moral school studied and toiled! how have they resolved, and vowed, and fasted, watched, and prayed, traveling through the whole circuit

of devout austerities! and set down at last, *wearied in the greatness of their way!* But no marvel! the *Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots.* Neither can impurity purify itself. Here again, light from the footsteps of the Christian truth breaks in upon the darkness; and gospel again flows from her tongue; the gospel of a *new heart*—the gospel of regenerating and sanctifying grace; as the promise, the gift, the work of God. "*I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh; and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.*" Here all our difficulties are resolved at once. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus, quickens *the dead in trespasses and sins. The Lord, our strength, works in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.* That which was impossible with men, is not so with him; for *with him all things are possible; even the subduing our iniquities;* creating us anew, after his own image, *in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;* turning our polluted souls into his own *habitation through the Spirit;* and making us *meet for the*

inheritance of the saints in light. Verily *this is gospel;* worthy to go in company with remission of sin. And shall I conquer at last? Shall I, indeed, be delivered from the bondage and the torment of corruption? A new sensation passes through my breast. *I lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help;* and with the hope of *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, hail my immortality.

Fourthly. Having thus removed our guilt, and cleansed our affections, the gospel proceeds to put us in possession of *adequate enjoyment.* An irresistible law of our being impels us to seek happiness. Nor will a million of frustrated hopes deter from new experiments; because despair is infinitely more excruciating than the fear of fresh disappointment. But an impulse, always vehement and never successful, multiplies the materials and inlets of pain. This assertion carries with it its own proof; and the principle it assumes is verified by the history of our species. In every place, and at all times, ingenuity has been racked to meet the ravenous desires. Occupation, wealth, dignity, science, amusement, all have been tried; are all tried at this hour; and all in vain. The heart still repines: the unappeased cry is, Give, give. There is a fatal error somewhere; and the gospel detects it. Fallen away from God, we have substituted the creature in his

place. This is the grand mistake the fraud which sin has committed upon our nature. The gospel reveals God as the satisfying good, and brings it within our reach. It proclaims him reconciled in Christ Jesus, as our father, our friend, our portion. It introduces us into his presence with liberty to ask in the Intercessor's name, and asking, to *receive, that our joy may be full.* It keeps us under his eye; surrounds us with his arm; feeds us upon *living bread* which he *gives from heaven:* seals us up to an eternal inheritance; and even engages to reclaim our dead bodies from the grave, and fashion them in beauty, which shall vie with heaven! It is enough! My prayers and desires can go no further: I have got to the *fountain of living waters—Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!*

This gospel of immortality, in righteousness, purity, and bliss, would be inestimable, were it even obscure, and not to be comprehended without painful scrutiny. But I observe again,

Fifthly. That, unlike the systems of men, and contrary to their anticipations, the gospel is as *simple*, as it is glorious. Its primary doctrines, though capable of exercising the most disciplined talent, are adapted to the common understanding. Were they dark and abstruse, they might gratify a speculative mind, but would be lost upon

the multitude, and be unprofitable to all, as doctrines of consolation. The mass of mankind never can be profound reasoners. To omit other difficulties, they have not leisure. Instruction, to do them good, must be interesting, solemn, repeated, and plain. This is the benign office of the gospel. Her principal topics are few; they are constantly recurring in various connections; they come home to every man's condition; they have an interpreter in his bosom; they are enforced by motives which honesty can hardly mistake, and conscience will rarely dispute. Unlettered men, who love their Bible, seldom quarrel about the prominent articles of faith and duty; and as seldom do they appear among the proselytes of that meagre refinement which arrogates the title of *Philosophical Christianity.*

From its simplicity, moreover, the gospel derives advantages in consolation. Grief, whether in the learned or illiterate, is always simple. A man, bowed down under calamity, has no relish for investigation. His powers relax; he leans upon his comforter; his support must be without toil, or his spirit faints. Conformably to these reflections, we see, on the one hand, that the unlearned compose the bulk of Christians; the life of whose souls is in the substantial doctrines of the cross—and on the other, that in the time of affliction even the careless lend their ear to the

voice of revelation. Precious, at all times, to believers, it is doubly precious in the hour of trial. These things prove, not only that the gospel, when understood, gives a peculiar relief in trouble, but that it is readily apprehended, being most acceptable, when we are the least inclined to critical research.

Sixthly. The gospel, so admirable for its simplicity, has also the recommendation of *truth.* The wretch who dreams of transport, feels a new sting in his wretchedness, when he opens his eyes and the delusion is fled. No real misery can be removed, nor any real benefit conferred, by doctrines which want the seal of certainty. And were the gospel of Jesus a human invention; or were it checked by any rational suspicion, that it may turn out to be a fable; it might retain its brilliancy, its sublimity, and even a portion of its interest; but the charm of its consolation would be gone. Nay, it would add gall to bitterness, by fostering a hope, which the next hour might laugh to scorn. But we may dismiss our anxiety: for there is no hazard of such an issue. Not only "grace," but "*truth*," came by Jesus Christ. *The gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*, were words of the *Amen, the faithful and true Witness;* and those which he has written in his blessed book, are *pure words, as silver tried in the furnace, purified seven times.* His promises can

no man deny to be *exceeding great;* yet they derive their value to us from assurances, which, by satisfying the hardest conditions of evidence, render doubt not only inexcusable, but even criminal. *By two immutable things in which it was* IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD TO LIE, *we have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.* Now, therefore, the promises of the gospel which are "exceeding great," are also "precious." We need not scruple to trust ourselves for this life and the life to come, upon that word which shall stand when *heaven and earth pass away.* Oh, it is this which makes Christianity glad tidings to the depressed and perishing! No fear of disappointment! No hope that shall *make ashamed!* Under the feet of evangelical faith is a covenant-promise, and that promise is everlasting Rock. *I know*, said one, whose testimony is corroborated by millions in both worlds, *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

Lastly. The gospel, as a system of consolation, is perfected by the *authority* and energy which accompany it. The devices of man originate in his fancy, and expire with his breath. Destitute of power, they play around depravity, like shadows round the mountain top, and vanish without leaving an impression. Their effect would be incon-

siderable, could he manifest them to be true; because he cannot compel the admission of truth itself into the human mind. Indifference, unreasonableness, prejudice, petulance, oppose to it an almost incredible resistance. We see this in the affairs of every day, and especially in the stronger conflicts of opinion and passion. Now, beside the opposition which moral truth has always to encounter, there is a particular reason why the truth of the gospel, though most salutary, though attested by every thing within us and around us; by life and death; by earth and heaven and hell; will not succeed unless backed by divine energy. It is this. Sin has perverted the understanding of man, and poisoned his heart. It persuaded him first to throw away his blessedness, and then to hate it. The reign of this hatred, which the scriptures call *enmity against God*, is most absolute in every unrenewed man. It teaches him never to yield a point unfriendly to one corruption, without stipulating for an equivalent in favor of another. Now, as the gospel flatters *none* of his corruptions in *any* shape, it meets with deadly hostility from *all his corruptions* in *every* shape. It is to no purpose that you press upon him the "great salvation;" that you demonstrate his errors and their corrective; his diseases and their cure. Demonstrate you may, but you convert him not. He

will occasionally startle and listen; but it is only to relapse into his wonted supineness: and you shall as soon call up the dead from their dust, as awaken him to a sense of his danger, and prevail with him to embrace the salvation of God. "Where then," you will demand, "is the pre-eminence of your gospel?" I answer, with the apostle Paul, that *it is the power of God to salvation.* When a sinner is to be converted, that is, when a slave is to be liberated from his chains, and a rebel from execution, that same voice which has spoken in the scriptures, speaks by them to his heart, and commands an audience. He finds the word of God to be *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.* It sets him before the bar of Justice; strips him of his self-importance; *sweeps away his refuge of lies;* and shows him that death which is *the wages of sin.* It then conducts him, all trembling, to the divine forgiveness; reveals Christ Jesus in his soul, as his righteousness, his peace, his hope of glory. Amazing transition! But is not the cause equal to the effect? *Hath not the potter power over the clay?* Shall God draw, and the lame not run? Shall God speak, and the deaf not hear? Shall God breathe, and the slain not live? Shall God *lift up the light of his countenance* upon sinners reconciled in his dear Son, and they not be happy? Glory to his name!

These are no fictions. *We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. The record, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart*, is possessed by thousands who have *turned from the power of Satan unto God*, and will certify that the revolution was accomplished by his word. And if it perform such prodigies on corruption and death, what shall it not perform in directing, establishing, and consoling them, who have already obtained a *good hope through grace?* He who thunders in the curse, speaks peace in the promise; and none can conceive its influence but they who have witnessed it. For proofs you must not go to the statesman, the traveler, or the historian. You must not go to the gay profession, or the splendid ceremonial. You must go to the chamber of unostentatious piety. You must go to the family anecdote, to the Christian tradition, to the observation of faithful ministers. Of the last there are many who, with literal truth, might address you as follows. "I *have seen* this gospel hush into a calm the tempest raised in the bosom by conscious guilt.—I *have seen* it melt down the most obdurate into tenderness and contrition. I *have seen* it cheer up the broken-hearted, and bring the tear of gladness into eyes swollen with grief. I *have seen* it produce and maintain serenity under

evils, which drive the worldling mad. I *have seen* it reconcile the sufferer to his cross, and send the song of praise from lips quivering with agony. I *have seen* it enable the most affectionate relatives to part in death; not without emotion, but without repining; and with a cordial surrender of all that they held most dear, to the disposal of their heavenly Father. I *have seen* the fading eye brighten at the promise of Jesus, *Where I am, there shall my servant be also.* I *have seen* the faithful spirit released from its clay, now mildly, now triumphantly, to enter into the joy of its Lord."

Who, among the children of men, that *doubts* this representation, would not *wish* it to be correct? Who, that thinks it only *probable*, will not welcome the doctrine on which it is founded, as *worthy of all acceptation?* And who, that *knows* it to be true, will not set his seal to that doctrine as being, most emphatically, *gospel preached to the poor?*

In applying to practical purposes, the account which has now been given of the Christian religion, I remark,

1. That it fixes a criterion of Christian ministrations.

If he, who *spake as never man spake*, has declared his own doctrine to abound with consolation to the miserable, then, certainly, the instruc-

tions of others are evangelical, only in proportion as they subserve the same gracious end. A contradiction, not unfrequent among some advocates of revelation, is to urge against the infidel its power of comfort, and yet to avoid, in their own discourses, almost every principle from which that power is drawn. Disregarding the mass of mankind, to whom the gospel is peculiarly fitted; and omitting those truths which might revive the grieved spirit, or touch the slumbering conscience, they discuss their moral topics in a manner unintelligible to the illiterate, uninteresting to the mourner, and without alarm to the profane. This is not "preaching Christ." Elegant dissertations upon virtue and vice, upon the evidences of revelation, or any other general subject, may entertain the prosperous and the gay; but they will not *mortify our members which are upon the earth;* they will not unsting calamity, nor feed the heart with an imperishable hope. When I go to the house of God, I do not want amusement. I want *the doctrine which is according to godliness.* I want to hear of the remedy against the harassings of my guilt, and the disorder of my affections. I want to be led from weariness and disappointment, to that *goodness which filleth the hungry soul.* I want to have light upon the mystery of providence; to be taught how the *judgments of the Lord are right;* how I shall

be prepared for duty and for trial—how I may *pass the time of my sojourning here in fear*, and close it in peace. Tell me of that Lord Jesus, *who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* Tell me of his *intercession for the transgressors* as their *advocate with the Father.* Tell me of his Holy Spirit, whom *they that believe on him receive*, to be their preserver, sanctifier, comforter. Tell me of his chastenings; their necessity, and their use. Tell me of his presence, and sympathy, and love. Tell me of the virtues, as growing out of his cross, and nurtured by his grace. Tell me of the glory reflected on his name by the obedience of faith. Tell me of vanquished death, of the purified grave, of a blessed resurrection, of the life everlasting—and my bosom warms. This is gospel; these are glad tidings to me as a sufferer, because glad to me as a sinner. They rectify my mistakes; allay my resentments; rebuke my discontent; support me under the weight of moral and natural evil. These attract the poor; steal upon the thoughtless; awe the irreverent; and throw over the service of the sanctuary a majesty, which some fashionable modes of address never fail to dissipate. Where they are habitually neglected, or lightly referred to, there may be much grandeur, but there is no gospel; and those preachers have infinite reason to tremble, who, though admired

by the great, and caressed by the vain, are deserted by the poor, the sorrowful, and such as *walk humbly with their God.*

2. We should learn from the gospel, lessons of active benevolence.

The Lord Jesus, who *went about doing good, has left us an example that we should follow his steps.* Christians, on whom he has bestowed affluence, rank, or talent, should be the last to disdain their fellow-men, or to look with indifference on indigence and grief. Pride, unseemly in all, is detestable in them, who confess that *by grace they are saved.* Their Lord and Redeemer, who humbled himself by assuming their nature, came to *deliver the needy, when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper.* And surely an object, which was not unworthy of the Son of God, cannot be unworthy of any who are called by his name. Their wealth and opportunities, their talents and time, are not their own, nor to be used according to their own pleasure; but to be consecrated by their vocation *as fellow-workers with God.* How many hands that hang down would be lifted up; how many feeble knees confirmed; how many tears wiped away; how many victims of despondency and infamy rescued by a close imitation of Jesus Christ. Go, with your opulence to the house of famine, and the retreats of disease. Go, *deal*

thy bread to the hungry; when thou seest the naked, cover him; and hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Go, and furnish means to rear the offspring of the poor; that they may at least have access to the word of your God. Go, and quicken the flight of the Angel, who has *the everlasting gospel to preach* unto the nations. If you possess not wealth, employ your *station* in promoting *good will toward men. Judge the fatherless; plead for the widow.* Stimulate the exertions of others, who may supply what is *lacking on your part.* Let the *beauties of holiness* pour their lustre upon your distinctions, and recommend to the unhappy that peace, which yourselves have found in the salvation of God. If you have neither riches nor rank, devote your *talents.* Ravishing are the accents, which dwell on *the tongue of the learned*, when it *speaks a word in season to him that is weary.* Press your genius and your eloquence into the service of the *Lord your righteousness*, to magnify his word, and display the riches of his grace. Who knoweth, whether he may honor you to be the minister of joy to the disconsolate, of liberty to the captive, of life to the dead? If he has denied you wealth, and rank, and talent, consecrate your *heart.* Let it dissolve in sympathy. There is nothing to hinder your *rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and your weeping with them*

that weep; nor to forbid the interchange of kind and soothing offices. *A brother is born for adversity;* and not only should Christian be to Christian, *a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*, but he should exemplify the loveliness of his religion to *them that are without.* An action, a word, marked by the sweetness of the gospel, has often been owned of God for producing the happiest effects. Let no man, therefore, try to excuse his inaction; for no man is too inconsiderable to augment the triumphs of the gospel, by assisting in the consolation which it yields to the miserable.

3. Let all classes of the unhappy repair to the Christian truth, and *draw water with joy out of its wells of salvation!* Assume your own characters, O ye children of men; present your grievances, and accept the consolation which the gospel tenders. Come, now, ye tribes of pleasure, who have exhausted your strength in pursuing phantoms that retire at your approach! The voice of the Son of God in the gospel is, Wherefore *spend ye your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness!* Come, ye tribes of ambition, who burn for the applause of your fellow-worms. The voice of the Son of God to you is, *The*

friendship of this world is enmity with God; but *if any serve me, him will my Father honor.* Come, ye avaricious, who *pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor.* The voice of the Son of God is, Wisdom is *more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her*—but *what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Come, ye profane! The voice of the Son of God is, *Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness; behold, I bring near my righteousness.* Come, ye formal and self-sufficient, who say *that ye are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* The voice of the Son of God is, *I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire that ye may be rich; and white raiment that ye may be clothed; and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that ye may see.* Come, ye, who, being convinced of sin, fear lest the *fierce anger of the Lord fall upon you.* The voice of the Son of God is, *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* Come, ye disconsolate, whose souls sre sad, because the Comforter is away. The voice of the

Son of God is, The Lord *hath sent me to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.* Come, ye tempted, who are borne down with the violence of the *law in your members,* and of assaults from the evil one. The voice of the Son of God is, *I will be merciful to your unrighteousnesses; and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.* Come, ye children of domestic wo, upon whom the Lord has made a breach, by taking away your counselors and support. The voice of the Son of God is, *Leave thy fatherless children with me; I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.* Come, ye, from whom mysterious providence has swept away the acquisitions of long and reputable industry. The voice of the Son of God is, *My son, if thou wilt receive my words,* thou shalt have *a treasure in the heavens that faileth not;* and mayest *take joyfully the spoiling of thy goods, knowing that thou hast in heaven a better and an enduring substance.* Come, ye poor, who without property to lose, are grappling with distress, and exposed to want. The Son of God, though the heir of all things, *had not where to lay his head;* and his voice to his poor is, *Be content with such things as ye have, for I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water*

shall be sure. Come, ye reproached, who find *cruel mockings* a most bitter persecution. The voice of the Son of God is, *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you.* Come, in fine, ye dejected, whom the fear of death holds in bondage. The voice of the Son of God is, *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction! repentance shall be hid from mine eyes!*—Blessed Jesus! thy loving kindness shall *be my joy in the house of my pilgrimage!* and I will praise thee *while I have any being*, for that gospel which thou hast preached to the poor!

A SERMON,

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 20th, 1793,

A DAY SET APART

IN

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

FOR

PUBLIC FASTING, HUMILIATION

AND

PRAYER,

ON ACCOUNT OF

THE YELLOW FEVER

IN THE

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

How is it that ye do not discern this time? Luke xii. 56. I have sent among you the pestilence; your young men have I slain by the sword; and have taken away your horses; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Amos iv. 10.

SERMON II.

DIVINE JUDGMENTS.

HAB. II. 3.

O Lord—in wrath remember mercy.

At the time when our prophet directed to the throne of grace, that sublime and affecting petition of which our text is a part, the circumstances of his country were calamitous, and her prospects alarming. The most high God, provoked at her unfaithfulness, had withdrawn the smiles of his countenance, and the protection of his arm. To make her know, by sad experience, that it is indeed an evil thing and bitter to depart from God, he commissioned his servant Habakkuk to foretell the speedy invasion of the Chaldeans, and to declare that he would yield her a helpless prey to this fierce and unpitying foe. The posterity of Abraham, like all other

sinners, were the authors of all the woes which they felt or expected. Regardless of this first principle of sound policy, that "*righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*," the generality of the Jews had abandoned the God of their fathers, and *turned aside like a deceitful bow*. Not only were they blind to the typical nature of their economy, and the spiritual sense of their peculiar observances; but they threw off the restraint of moral principle, and indulged, with unblushing impudence, their criminal passions. To such an awful height had impiety and profligacy risen, that they were chargeable with *transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing from their God; speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving, and uttering from the heart, words of falsehood. Yea judgment was turned away backward, and justice stood afar off; for truth was fallen in the street, and equity could not enter; yea truth failed, and he that departed from evil, made himself a prey.* In vain did God warn by his providence; in vain remonstrate by his prophets: these sons of rebellion and obstinacy persisted in their crimes, till "*the sin of Judah*," no longer tolerable, was "*written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.*" Abused patience aggravated, and hastened, the doom of this guilty people. Since they hardened their hearts against mild expostulation, and

gentle correction, the Lord God thundered his threatenings, and in terrible indignation said, "*Shall I not visit for these things? And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*" Pious Habakkuk, who clearly saw the impending ruin, wept, in secret, over the infatuation of his countrymen; acknowledged the justice of Jehovah's controversy; and wrestled, in fervent prayer, for devoted Israel. "*O Lord, I have heard thy speech,*" the sentence which thou hast denounced against my people, "*and was afraid: O Lord,*" we indeed deserve all the evils to which it condemns us: yet cast us not, I pray thee, out of thy sight, but "*revive thy work in the midst of the years,*" these years of trouble which are coming upon us; "*in the midst even of these years, make known*" thyself, and thy tender compassions: "*in wrath,*" merited wrath, "*remember,*" and testify, unmerited "*mercy.*"

The words *wrath, mercy, remember*, which occur in the text, must be understood, and explained in a sense which will not militate against the purity and simplicity of the divine nature. It would be both ignorant and impious to ascribe to Jehovah those emotions which agitate the bosom of a mortal. In the uncreated mind, there is, properly speaking, neither passion, nor affection, but all is pure *act*. The *wrath* of God, then, as it respects himself, in his *holy determination to*

punish sin; and, as it respects his creatures, is the *execution* of that determination. *Mercy*, in Him, is that perfection which is ever ready to relieve the miserable; and when it regards misery connected with *guilt*, it is termed *grace.*

As every thing is invariably present to the infinite mind, God cannot be strictly said to *forget:* and therefore to *remember mercy*, is the same as to *show mercy:* And the prayer of the prophet is briefly this, that the Lord would graciously remove from the Israelites the punishment of their sin, or would soften, with kindness, the rigor of his chastisements.

Let us not imagine, my brethren, that *we* have no concern in a petition which refers immediately to an occasion that existed many centuries past. To all who "*discern the signs of the times*," the judgments of God, which are abroad in the land, furnish an ample proof, that this is a day of rebuke, and of the Lord's anger. And, therefore, every one who is under the power of godliness, will immediately see, that the inquiries, and the exercises suggested by the prayer of the prophet, are peculiarly adapted to the serious purpose for which we have this morning assembled. "*O Lord, in wrath remember mercy.*"

In applying these words to the service of the day, we are naturally led to contemplate our *situation,* and our *duty.* By adverting to the for-

mer, we will find, that *wrath* is upon us from the Lord; and therefore our duty is to plead with him for *mercy*.

First, with respect to our *situation:* The Lord is dealing with us in wrath.

Here lend me your attention, whilst I briefly prove the fact; and vindicate the divine procedure, by showing the righteous reasons on which it is founded.

I. The Lord is dealing with us in wrath.

Let the careless, if they please, contemn the assertion as of no importance; or the profane deride it as the child of superstition; it is a solemn truth, that Jehovah *has* a controversy with America. Very suitable to her condition is the spirit of the prophetic exclamation, "*Hear ye, O mountains; and ye strong foundations of the earth! for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.*" For the confirmation of what has now been advanced, it is not necessary to recur to scenes which time has almost buried in oblivion, and which are no where preserved but in the records of the historian. Those symptoms of the divine displeasure on which I insist, are such as have recently occurred, and must be fresh in the memories of all who have arrived at the age of manhood.

It is not long since war desolated our country. We saw her invaded by a numerous and disci-

plined army, trained to be the tool of oppression, and hired to commit deeds of blood, in order to insure success to schemes of iniquity—We saw our suffering citizens driven from their homes by these sons of plunder, and obliged to seek, among strangers, an asylum from the wintry blast, and relief from the miseries of poverty and exile—We saw the temples of the living God wrested from the peaceful worshiper; ravaged and wrapt in flames, by wretches whose senselessness could be equalled only by their impiety—We saw a part, at least, of the states overrun by banditti, whose conduct was marked with perfidy and violence—We saw the sword of slaughter drawn, and the fields of America drenched with the blood of her children. For more than seven years did wo stream her bitterness into our daily cup. At length the Lord was pleased to remove from us the rod of his anger; to respite us from affliction, and to give peace in our borders. The happy effects of a change so desirable, were immediately and sensibly felt. As soon as the pressure of external calamity was taken off, languishing Commerce recovered her vigor: Agriculture was prosecuted with safety and success; Science resumed her wonted seats; and all the arts of peace were cultivated, and flourished. He who should compare our unpromising condition with our miraculous preservation, would

be ready to conclude, that Americans, above all others, would most affectionately remember a favor so great and unexpected. Yet, to our shame be it spoken, when our enemies were gone, we neglected the God of our deliverance. But he soon made it evident, by another alarming providence, that he had not forgotten our past transgressions, and that he did not overlook our present unthankfulness. The enviable blessings which his bounty bestowed, we had reason to fear would again be torn from us. The storm once more thickened, and lowered, and threatened. Four years, from the restoration of peace, had not elapsed, when the reflecting patriot foresaw the rapid approach of danger more formidable than that which we had escaped. The bond of general union proved too feeble for the important purposes for which it was formed. Clashing interests and turbulent spirits foreboded the introduction of Anarchy, with all the curses that follow in his train. But the Lord, long suffering, did not pour out upon us the fury of his anger. He shook the rod over us that we might observe it; and laid it aside without chastising. Loth to make us the monuments of his wrath, and willing to reclaim us from our guilty indifference, he tried the arguments of mercy. He dissipated the blackening clouds, and gave us a constitution which secures, to all ranks of

citizens, every species of right; which combines wisdom with energy; and connects the dignity of the government, with the safety and happiness of the individual. The prospect of evil had awakened the sensibility of the public mind, and the prompt salvation obliged even politicians to acknowledge "*the finger of God.*" But when the panic subsided, the devotion subsided with it: and America quickly relapsed into her former lethargy.

To chastise the hypocrisy, and cure the indifference, which all orders of men had betrayed, Jehovah commissioned his army, against which valor and skill are no defense, to avenge his quarrel. A host of destructive insects, sporting with the puny efforts of human exertion, traversed the country, and mowed down, in their march, the staff of life. "*The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.*" Had they continued their devastations, we could have expected little but "*cleanness of teeth in all our dwellings.*"* Startled at the alarming progress of this minute yet invincible foe, our citizens who were not wholly dead to religious principle, were constrained to remark the judgment of the Most High, and to implore the aid of him whom they had offended. But

* See the history of the *Hessian Fly*, in the American Museum, Vol. iv. p. 302.

the pang of penitence was no longer felt when the affliction ceased, and the return of prosperity was accompanied with a return of transgression.

To remind us of our sin and of our duty, the monitions of Providence were *again* employed. In just indignation, God sent upon our frontiers the Indian tribes. War lighted, once more, his hostile torch, and Death unfurled his banners. Our western brethren were exposed to the indescribable horrors of a savage warfare: a warfare of which the unvarying maxim is, an indiscriminate murder of every age and sex. Elated with the persuasion that their power was irresistible by the hordes of the wilderness, the state resolved to crush, at a blow, the troublesome combination which was formed against them. But they trusted in an arm of flesh; the God of battles fought for their enemies, and what was the issue? Let the banks of St. Mary, and the adjacent grounds which now whiten with the bones of our youth, tell the tale of wo!* From that

* The affecting catastrophe here alluded to, happened on the 4th of November, 1791. On that inauspicious day, the American army which General St. Clair led against the western Indians was entirely defeated. The battle was fought at the river St. Mary, about fifteen miles from the Miami village. The army consisted of about 1400 effective men. No less than 38 officers and above 1100 men were killed: and it was with difficulty that the miserable remnant made good their retreat. See, General St. Clair's official letter, American Museum, vol. 10, appendix. Quarter-Master Hodgdon's return of the officers killed and wounded, p. 28. The

disastrous period to this, the vengeful barbarian has more or less committed depredations on our borders; pillaging the property and destroying the lives of our citizens. What shall we say to the *present* aspect of Providence? You all know the deplorable condition of our neighboring city. A few weeks ago she was a city of prosperity and joy—Commerce crowded her harbor and thronged her streets—Mechanic industry boasted her useful, though humbler toil—Literature saw, with delight, her growing honors—Amusement led up her sportive train—Jollity assembled the sons of mirth: All was life—all was ardor. But, how sad the change! The hurry of business has ceased—The hands of industry are idle—Gayety is fled. All faces gather blackness; and the theatre of pleasure is converted into one great house of mourning. "*The mirth of tabrets ceaseth: the noise of them that rejoice endeth: the joy of the harp ceaseth: They shall not drink wine with a song: strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it:—every house is shut up, that no man may come in. In the city is left desolation; and the gate is smitten with destruction.*" Death has erected, in the midst of her, his gloomy throne. With fury uncontrolled, he

"Report of a committee of congress respecting the failure of the expedition under General St. Clair," ib. vol. 9, appendix 2d, p. 79—82; and also appendix 3d, p. 2.

rages through all descriptions of men. In all directions fly the shafts of this unerring archer. Every day he multiplies his triumphs. The young, the old, the honorable, and the vile, fall the undistinguished prey of this remorseless tyrant. Vain, as yet, have been all human expedients to arrest his progress, and baffle his power. He mocks opposition—He strews the earth with slain—He numbers among his victims even the "masters of the healing art."

Let none consider this dire calamity as an event in which only the immediate sufferers are concerned. To punish *their* iniquities it has, doubtless, been sent. But are they *single* in transgression? Have *we* escaped because we are better than they? No, in no wise. A sovereign God has made them an example of his righteous vengeance. The evil under which they languish is one of those awful dispensations by which Jehovah speaks, in thunder, to a guilty people. The destroying Angel, who is now executing upon our fellow-citizens and fellow-sinners the awards of Heaven, looks terribly on *us*, looks terribly on *all*.—Whether he will bend his course hither, God only knows.

Now, my brethren, lay all these things together, and ask your own consciences, whether the Lord has not been, and is not at this moment, dealing with us in wrath? Assuredly, "*for all*

this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

Philosophers may speculate and argue as they please. They may pretend to assign merely natural causes for all these events. But let it be remembered, that GOD ACTUATES NATURE. Nature, without God, is a word either destitute of meaning, or replete with blasphemy. Jehovah accomplishes, by *natural means*, the wise and holy ends of his moral government. By natural means he preserves the righteous: by natural means he punishes the guilty. "*Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?*" But why accumulate arguments to prove that the affliction which we deplore is not a chance, but a divine appointment? Your very appearance in the sanctuary this morning, is a public testimony of your deep conviction that "*this also cometh forth from Jehovah, who is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.*"

Since, then, the distresses under which we have formerly smarted, and that which now afflicts some of our citizens, and threatens more, is "*the doing of the Lord*," permit me

2. To "vindicate the ways of God to man," by showing what righteous reasons he has for dealing with us in wrath.

We need not go far to look for causes: They are within us, and around us. We will find

abundant reason to justify the divine procedure, if we advert to our *ingratitude*, our *insincerity*, our *pride*, our *obstinacy*, and the *prevalence of various kinds of moral evil.*

It is but too evident to any one who cursorily inspects the conduct of God to us, and our conduct to him, that we have been *very ungrateful.*

There is no nation under heaven for which God hath done so much in so short a time, as he hath done for America. In the season of our danger, when our *hope was* almost *as the giving up of the ghost*, and we felt ourselves unable to work out our own deliverance, we supplicated his aid. Memorable, to distant ages should be the 20th of July, 1775:* when the injured millions of America, prostrate before the throne of the Eternal, poured out their complaint, and sent their cry, to him *that judgeth rightly.* Jehovah heard our cry. *He bowed his heavens and came down.* Our armies, destitute of discipline, of arms, of ammunition, of food, of clothing, fainting with hunger, and freezing with cold, he crowned with victory the most signal and decisive. He restored peace to our borders: He blessed our commerce: He opened the windows of Heaven, and poured plenty into our dwellings: He kept us from the confusion, and

* Observed throughout the continent as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer; and one of the most solemn days she ever saw.

tumult, and miseries, of civil feuds He has preserved us, hitherto, from being involved in the broils and bloodshed of Europe. He has sweetened all these mercies by fixing us in the secure enjoyment of every privilege our hearts can wish: He has given us the everlasting gospel, we trust, in its purity: and has been inviting, by the allurements of his love, to the enjoyment of his rest. But where has been our gratitude? What have we rendered to the Lord for this profusion of benefits? Let us appeal to the most interesting, important, and solemn business in which we have been engaged since our national existence. One would imagine that no occasion of making a pointed and public acknowledgment of the divine benignity, could have presented itself so obviously, as the framing an instrument of government which, in the nature of things, must be closely allied to our happiness or our ruin. And yet that very constitution which the singular goodness of God enabled us to establish, does not so much as recognize his *being!** Yes, my brethren, it is a lamentable

* While many, on various pretenses, have criminated the federal constitution, one objection has urged itself forcibly on the *pious* mind. That no notice whatever should be taken of that God who planteth a nation and plucketh it up at his pleasure, is an omission which no pretext whatever can palliate. Had such a momentous business been transacted by *Mahometans*, they would have begun, "*In the name of God.*" Even the savages whom we despise, setting a better example, would have paid some homage to the

truth a truth at the mention of which shame should crimson our faces; that, like Jeshurun of old, we have *waxed fat and kicked. Of the Rock that begat us we have been unmindful, we have forgotten his works, and the wonders that he hath shewed us.*

There is a connection between crimes, as well as between graces. Never will we find, either in individuals or communities, a solitary sin. In the conduct of America, particularly, there has been a most unworthy combination. Little is necessary to prove, that if we have been ungrateful, we have also been *insincere.*

Who does not remember the professedly penitential tears which streamed from every eye, and the groans which burst from every heart, when the hand of the Lord lay heavy upon us. Our rulers and public men led the way to acts of solemn devotion, and invited their fellow-citizens to join together in *humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God?* Who proscribed as far as

Great Spirit. But, from the constitution of the United States, it is impossible to ascertain *what* God we worship; or whether we own a God *at all.* It is a very insufficient apology to plead, that the devotion which political institutions offer to the Supreme Being, is, in most cases, a matter of mere form: For the hypocrisy of one man, or set of men, is surely no excuse for the infidelity of another. Should the citizens of America be as irreligious as her constitution, we will have reason to tremble, lest the Governor of the universe, who will not be treated with indignity by a people, any more than by individuals, overturn, from its foundation, the fabric we have been rearing, and crush us to atoms in the wreck.

their authority could reach, those guilty amusements and practices which provoke the Most High to pour out his fury upon a people? *Who* reprobated, and exhorted others to discountenance, that seminary of vice, that corrupter of moral principle, that parent of profligacy, the *theatre? Who* condemned *games of chance, horse-racing*,* and other kinds of immoral behavior?

* To some it may appear strange that games of chance, such as *cards, dice*, &c., were ranked among the sins of the land. The usual pretext that they are harmless pastimes, is very flimsy, and altogether inadmissible. Independently on the odious consequences, with which they are generally connected, they are much more criminal than many are inclined to allow. It may safely be affirmed that they are palpable violations of the third precept of the decalogue. What is a *name?* It is a distinguishing mark. What is the name of God? It is any thing by which he *makes himself known.* Now he makes himself known as the God of *Providence*; and therefore to sport with his providence, is equivalent to sporting with his divinity. But with this all games of chance are chargeable. If the providence of God extends to the *fall of a sparrow*, why not to the shuffle of a card, or the cast of the dice? But the former cannot happen without a divine appointment (Mat. xii. 10.); therefore the latter cannot. We are positively assured that "*the whole disposing of the lot is from the Lord.*" (Prov. xvi. 33.) And all games of chance are lots. On some occasions it may not only be lawful, but a duty, to refer certain cases, by religious lot, to the decision of God's tribunal. This is a mode af acknowledging his supremacy, which he has honored with his approbation, under the dispensation both of the Old Testament and the New; and which, under the former, he expressly commanded. The religious *lot*, then, it is plain, is an act of worship precisely of the same kind with the religious *oath.* Both are solemn and *direct* appeals to Omniscience and Omnipotence. And games of chance bear, in every particular, the same relation to the former, which profane swearing bears to the latter; whence the conclusion, however uncomfortable, is inevitable, that if profane swearing is criminal, so are games of chance; nay, that these

Did not the representatives of the community? *Who*, since the restoration of peace, have been the first to throw off every appearance of respect for the authority of the great God, and to treat his ordinances, and his word with contempt? Have they not too often been those to whom the most important interests of the country were committed? Have not men in office,

games are every jot as wicked as common, customary imprecation. It is foolish to say, "We *mean* no evil." Every cursing reprobate pleads the same excuse. "This mode of arguing," it may be said, "draws very deep, and involves in the guilt of sporting with Divine Providence, not only games of chance, but all amusements of skill; and, eventually, all, even the most innocent actions of our lives; since the issue of them all must be determined by the superintendence of Divine Providence; and, therefore, that either this dreadful consequence must be admitted, or the principle on which games of chance are condemned, given up; and these games, of course, justified." But the objection proves by far too much. No man will deny murder to be a horrible crime. Now, as it can be, and often has been, demonstrated, that all *spontaneous* motion, to which belongs all *muscular* and *vital* motion, is the effect of the immediate agency of the Deity,* we must either, according to the doctrine of the objection, allow murder to be an innocent action, or throw the blame of it upon God himself. The truth is that the objection confounds two things essentially different. In games of chance, the principle which *makes* them such, and *without* which they would cease to be such, is the *appeal to God:* The decision is *designedly* put out of the reach of human foresight; and should a man use any precaution to determine the chance in his own favor, he would be accused of *unfair* play. This forms the *character* of the games in question, and distinguishes them from trials of skill, and all the common actions of life, the issue of which depends upon the providence of God. In the *former*, an appeal to God constitutes the *nature* of the game. In the *latter*, there are only some *circumstances* which his provi-

* Baxter's Matho. vol. i. p. 331—339.

and numbers of our principal citizens, been foremost to observe, in the face of day, that very conduct, which formerly they decried as unlawful in its nature, and destructive in its influence? Is this carriage which becomes those who vowed to live for God, if he would save them from their distress? We may see upon ourselves the black mark of Israel's duplicity and treason. "*When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God: and they remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God their Redeemer: Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.*" "*Be not deceived, God is not mocked: These things we wickedly have done, and he kept silence; we thought that he is altogether such a one as ourselves, but* now, by his providence, *he is reproving us, and setting our iniquities in order before our eyes.*

dence disposes: circumstances which necessarily attend our actions, as the actions of *dependent* beings.

As to *horse-racing*, it is a sin almost too flagrant to require any proof. God gave us his creatures to use for our good, not to torment for our diversion. And if the scripture says true, that "*the righteous man regardeth the life of his beast*," he who can habitually indulge himself, or countenance others, in a wanton, cruel abuse of one of the most generous animals that alleviate his toil, and promote his comfort, has a wretched claim to the character of a Christian

One who reflects upon the majesty of God, and the evil of sin, will see, in such vile ingratitude and hypocrisy, abundant reason to justify him for pleading with us in wrath: and instead of wondering that we are chastised, will wonder that the divine patience permits us to exist, when he surveys our *unbecoming pride.*

Have we not, my brethren, in numberless instances, acted as if we were the sources of our own happiness, and the sovereigns of our own conduct? As if we were neither subject to the jurisdiction, nor amenable to the tribunal, of "*the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being?*" Has not America, in the fullness of her prosperity, virtually said, "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?*" Has she not said, "*My power, and the might of my hand, have gotten me this wealth?*" Has she not said, with imperious Babylon, "*I shall be a lady forever; I am, and there is none else?*" Is it any thing strange then, that "*mischief which she is unable to put off, has fallen upon her?*" My brethren, God is jealous of his glory. He will not suffer the creature to affect independence on the Creator. He will make us know that "*Jehovah reigns, and, therefore, the people must tremble.*"

These abominations, too notorious to be denied, and too shocking to be palliated, are ren

dered still more heinous by the *obstinacy* which has uniformly characterized them.

What means have been neglected to show us our sin, to warn us of our danger, and bring us back to our duty? Has not God spoken to us both in judgment and in mercy? Has he not alternately inflicted his chastisements, and lavished his bounties? Has he not "*many a time turned his anger away, and refrained from stirring up all his wrath?*" And have we not persisted in walking contrary to him? Have we not made our "*neck an iron sinew, and our brow brass?*" Sins abound, but where are the penitent? Who "*sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land?*" Who appropriates to himself *his* share of the general guilt? Where is the humbled heart, where the contrite spirit, occasioned by such an appropriation? Shall the abuse of God's amazing patience and lenity, and our unfruitfulness under all the pains he has taken with us, go unpunished? No certainly! We may forget, but the Lord remembers: And if he sweep us not away with *the besom of destruction*, it is because he is the *Lord long-suffering*. But wo to him who argues, from the divine forbearance, that he shall pass with impunity. The longer Justice spares, the higher does she lift her arm, and the heavier will be her stroke at the last. "*He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his*

neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Such has been our behavior, and such behavior has drawn upon us the vengeance of Heaven. Here, then, our inquiries into the cause of the Lord's displeasure might end; but we may properly go a step farther, and observe that he is justly angry with us on account of the *prevalence of various kinds of moral evil.*

What respect is paid to those fundamental principles of moral rectitude upon which is founded, not only the prosperity, but the existence, of a commonwealth? Is not truth between man and man, the basis of mutual confidence, and the life of society, shamefully violated? Are not unmeaning professions, and gross adulation, too general in the circles of fashion? Is not the breach of absolute promise, particularly among debtors and tradesmen, become so common, that it is scarcely considered as a fault? Is not the bond of all civil union, the solemn appeal to Omniscience by oath, fallen almost into contempt, from the irreverent manner in which it is both administered, and taken? Is not the name of the great and terrible God, wantonly and outrageously blasphemed? Are not even children, who, it is probable, were never taught to put up one prayer to the Author of their being, expert in the infernal science of profane im-

precation? Do not our "streets resound with this language of hell?" Is it not heard even from the lips of many who presume to call themselves by the name of Christ? Yes, my brethren, "*Because of swearing the land mourneth.*"

What regard is shown to the important duties which are reciprocally incumbent upon the different members of families? Where are the watchful, circumspect, conscientious, praying parents? Where the humble, dutiful, pious children? What is become of family devotion? What, of family discipline? What, of the engagements into which parents, at the baptism of their infants entered to observe both? Is not neglect, in these particulars, a fatal source of youthful dissipation?* And what shall we say of that

* Families supply both church and state: and if genuine religion, and strict morality, be wanting there, society is poisoned at the fountain head. Through disrespect to *family religion*, the young grow up profoundly ignorant of their Creator, and unimpressed with reverence for his law; and surely we cannot expect that they who fear not God, will regard man. *Family discipline* also, is of the utmost moment. Parental vigilance and care, form useful members of the community. We have no right to flatter ourselves, that disorderly, disobedient, uncontrolled children, will become good citizens. To a criminal, a very criminal inattention in these two particulars, may be ascribed, in a great measure, that trifling character, and that vicious conduct, which mark the fopling and the rake, and of which the pious and the observing so generally, and so justly complain. Vain are the wisest laws without *virtuous habits;* and these habits must be formed in *early* life. Where the reverse obtains, the energy of law must necessarily be enfeebled, and the arm of justice unnerved. But although the fear of public ignominy, *should*, in most cases (for sometimes it certainly does *not*) restrain

profligacy of principle and manners, which is every where observable. Who "*rises up before the hoary head, and honors the face of the old man?*" On the contrary, are not the aged often treated with disrespect; the maxims of wisdom ridiculed, and the counsels of experience despised? Are there not multitudes who scarcely behave with common civility to the magistrate whom God has commanded us to revere? Are not intemperance, impurity, and debauchery hardy enough to face even the light? Do we not hear repeatedly of the lawless ramble, and the midnight revel? Are not these deeds of darkness and obscenity deemed, by too many, the marks of a generous spirit? And those who will not "*run to the same excess of riot,*" vilified as contracted bigots or superstitious fools?

In what manner is the SABBATH observed? "*Remember,*" is the divine injunction, remember "*the sabbath-day to keep it holy.*" Is it, indeed, kept holy? Do men, indeed, "*call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable?*" Do they "*honor him, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words?*" Do not many waste the day in idleness? Are not some so indolent or carnal,

from the commission of enormous outrages; it will be but a slender proof of social probity, that the terrors of penal statutes are barely sufficient to keep men from the gallows.

or both, that they will not wait upon God, that day, in the ordinances of his grace? Or that they too frequently allow their seats to be vacant at least one half of the day? Or esteem any pretext weighty enough to excuse their absence from the sanctuary? Let none hope to palliate their conduct by pretending that they improve themselves at home. It is altogether incredible, that he who will not sanctify the sabbath in God's house, will sanctify it in his own. This profanation of the sabbath is truly deplorable; but in not a few instances the profanation is still more gross. Do not some make it a day of business? Others a day of feasting? And others a day of visiting and amusement? Have not salutary laws been enacted to protect the sabbath from this open and shameless indignity?* Do our citizens regard these laws? Do our magistrates find fault with the breach of them? Whatever be the opinions of men, the Lord God will not suffer this iniquity to pass unpunished; for he has sworn "*if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day,—then will I kindle a fire in your gates, and it shall devour your palaces.*"†

* See, in the laws of the state of New York, an act passed Feb. 23, 1788.

† Jerem. xvii. 27. The enforcement of the observation of the sabbath, by civil authority, cannot be viewed as an unwarranted interference of the magistrate in matters of religion, or an infringement of the rights of conscience. For respect to this divine in-

What reception is given to the everlasting gospel? "*Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*" Who "*fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?*" Who glories in the cross of Christ? Who takes refuge from the curse of the law, in his covenant righteousness? Who bends the knee to a

stitution, is a point in which all denominations of Christians are agreed. Apart from Christian principle, the due observation of the sabbath has the happiest influence upon civil society *as such;* and therefore it merits the most vigilant and unintermitted attention of the civil magistrate. "It has been observed by the wisest men, that were the celebration of this weekly festival totally neglected, religion would not long survive its disuse." (*Venn's tracts, p.* 170.) And no society can exist without religion; because the members of it can have no hold upon each other. On proper inquiry, it would perhaps appear; it has, in fact, appeared, that a great majority of those unhappy men who are abandoned to infamy, or who terminate their days in a sacrifice to public justice, commenced the career of their crimes with the violation of the sabbath. "Consider those who help to fill the jails, and furnish the gallows, and it will be found (upon their own confession) they are such as have neglected the observation of the Lord's day, by following their own pleasures." (*Sabbatum redivivum, p.* 660.) To these remarks may be added a short extract from a published pamphlet. It is too much in point to be omitted, and too excellent to need an apology. "One Christian institution alone," says the ingenious author, "the sanctification of the Christian sabbath, diffuses a more benign influence on society, and has a greater efficacy on the morals of mankind to purify and refine them, than all the institutions of civil policy, or terrors of civil government, put together. The pauses it creates in human transactions; the interruptions it makes in our worldly cogitations, and earthly cares; its fixing, or keeping alive in the mind, the impressions of a God infinitely great and dreadful, whose we are, and to whom we must be accountable for all our ways; and who will most dreadfully punish the wicked, and plentifully reward the good; its tendency to keep constantly in our view, the immortality of the soul, and a future

sanctifying Savior? Whose holy ambition spurns the dregs of earth, and soars to the kingdom above? Where are those "*crowns of glory, the hoary heads found in the way to righteousness?*" Where the hopeful youth who dedicate themselves to the Lord God of their fathers: and

state of retribution; its being connected with such religious services as reading the holy scriptures, in which the most august, grand, and awfully sublime ideas of the Almighty are exhibited—Its relation to the infinite love of Christ to mankind—and the peremptory and awful injunctions of this Divine Savior, that men love one another—together with our joining in solemn, heart-felt supplications, confessions, and thanksgivings at the Throne of Grace; these things, I believe, have had, and still have, an efficacy on the minds of the great body of the people in Christian nations, I was almost going to say, infinitely great—and I firmly believe, that no man who ever became very vile and profligate, could possibly be so, till he renounced all solemn and serious attention to the Lord's day. A question has some time employed my thoughts, what in human nature it is that will account, in a rational manner, for the generally extreme wickedness of soldiers and sailors?—The true solution of the problem, I believe, is this. They do not carefully observe the Lord's day: they have no opportunity, or very little, of attending the worship of God: consequently the impressions of a God; of the worth of their souls; the evil of sin; and the infinite importance of a future state, are either very faint in their minds, or perhaps in some scarcely existent. In this respect, the institutions of Christianity have a most benign influence on society; and wise rulers, who wish rather to prevent crimes than to punish them, *will take care, both by precept and example, to promote the sanctification of the Christian sabbath.*—This is the best security of our life, property, and liberty. This is like the wings of the Almighty spread over us. No man, who conscientiously, and with knowledge, sanctifies the sabbath, will find a liberty in his mind to injure us through the week.—This is God's shadow extended over us;—it is Heaven's protection." (*A concise and faithful narrative*, &c. p. 68—70.)

who are not ashamed of Jesus and his words before a crooked and perverse generation?

On the contrary, what is the frequent treatment of the Bible? This blessed Bible which unfolds the counsels of Heaven, and proclaims the glad tidings of salvation? Is it not despised as the parent of enthusiasm, and calumniated as the offspring of fraud? Are not the exercises of that serious godliness which it inspires, which purifies the human mind; and ennobles the human character, reviled as the whine of fanaticism, or the cant of imposture? Is not infidelity the *fashion*? Is not the profession of a Christian thought to degrade the dignity of a *gentleman*? Is not the bold blasphemer of the holy oracles, admired, by many, as a man of genius? Is not the rude and impious jeer, at all which the wise and the good hold sacred, applauded for *wit*? Is not the paltry witticism, if it be but leveled against religion, complimented with the name of invincible argument? Does not every unfledged sciolist; every ignorant retailer of the sophisms of a Hume, or the quibbles of a Voltaire, set up for a philosopher, and think himself entitled to laugh at the faith of the saint? Is not the progress of principles so pernicious, an awful symptom of deep degeneracy? And is not the fact as notorious as it is distressing? "*If it*

be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?"

When we turn our eyes from these miserable mortals who carry the mark of hell in their foreheads, and survey the generality of professed believers, is there not reason to fear that a large proportion of them have only "*a name to live, while they are dead?*" How many call themselves *Christians*, while their whole deportment proves that they are, in truth, the enemies of Christ? No subject so tedious and irksome as redeeming love. Speak to them of the ideal scenes of a romance, and they are all attention and activity. But speak of the sweet realities of the gospel; of the height, the depth, the length, the breadth, of the love of Christ, and immediately they are languid and listless. Set before them the fooleries of the stage, and their bosoms will be agitated with alternate and violent emotions. Now they will be softened into pity, or roused into rage: Anon, they will melt in grief, or be transported with joy. But conduct them to Calvary: Show them that real tragedy which clothed all heaven in sackcloth—Show them a bleeding Savior—Show him stretched on the accursed tree; bowing in agony his guiltless head; and pouring out his soul unto death, a victim to divine wrath, a sacrifice for sin; and they will be cold and unfeel-

ing as a stone. Not a pang of remorse will shoot through the flinty heart, nor a tear of contrition steal down the iron cheek.

Do even the disciples of Jesus, who love him in sincerity, walk as he also walked? Do they live, as habitually as they ought, by faith, and not by sight? Do they improve, as they are bound, the precious promises? Do they apply to the fullness which is laid up for them in their new covenant head? Are congregations entirely free from those iniquities for which the Lord is visiting our land? Are there no ministerial transgressions? Yes, my brethren, the humiliating truth must be told, "*The Lord is righteous, I and my people have sinned.*"

It is, therefore, undeniable that the Lord is speaking to us in wrath, and that his controversy is holy and just. Let us, then, attend,

Secondly, To the duty which our circumstances and our text point out; and that is to plead with him for mercy,—*O Lord, in wrath remember mercy!*

Here it is requisite to elucidate some of those principles which the petition implies; and the temper with which we should employ it.

1. With respect to the principles of the petition.

It plainly implies that there *is* mercy, pardoning mercy, which may, consistently with both the

divine attributes, and the divine government, be freely communicated to the sinner.

Dreary, my brethren, would be our prospect, and miserable our consolation, were it absolutely necessary for the God whom we have offended to reward us exactly according to our deserts: Then, indeed, might we close our eyes on peace, and lie down in sorrow. "*If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity; O Lord, who could stand?*" Certainly *we* could not stand; *we*, whose conduct has been little else than a series of transgressions; and whose crimes have been attended with every hateful circumstance which can aggravate guilt, or increase punishment. Unable to answer our Judge, "*one of a thousand*" of the accusations he may bring against us, if we attempt to "*justify ourselves, our own mouths will condemn us.*" But, glory, eternal glory, be to God in the highest! *There is* FORGIVENESS *with him that he may be feared.* There is a Savior *for whose righteousness' sake* the Father *is well pleased.* Through this Savior we may safely approach that inflexible justice, and unspotted purity, which are otherwise *a consuming fire.* Our condition, therefore, though sad, is not hopeless. We are guilty, indeed, but not wholly cast off: We are afflicted, 'tis true, but not abandoned to despair. How great, how unequaled soever our provocations have been, we are encouraged to *hope in the Lord.*

for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption."

But, it may be asked, "Is there any reason for us to hope when we are visibly the objects of the divine displeasure? May we repair to mercy's throne, when slighted mercy has kindled the vengeful flame?" We may, for our text farther implies, *That the present wrath of God is no obstruction to the exercise of his mercy.*

This, the very prayer of Habakkuk, which was penned under the influence of the Holy One, manifestly supposes. This is supposed by all the prayers which, the scripture informs us, were directed to heaven for deliverance from affliction. This is supposed by the design of all God's wrathful dispensations, which are intended not only to *correct man, with rebukes, for his iniquity*; but to humble the arrogance of his spirit—to teach him his entire and universal dependence upon the One Supreme—to create in his mind religious sensibility—and bring the thankless prodigal back to the God from whom he has *deeply revolted. I will go*, says Jehovah by his prophet, *and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: In their affliction they will seek me early.* This same principle is supposed by his own positive injunction, recorded in the prophecy of Joel: *Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart; and with fasting, and with*

weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great mercy, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him. "Peradventure I shall live," is higher encouragement than the best of us merits: Upon this *peradventure* must a sinful man make an experiment of the divine mercy for the salvation of his soul, and a sinful land for her deliverance from trouble—It is enough for us to know, that God *can* be just in pardoning the ungodly—It is enough for us to know that Jesus Christ, the propitiation for sin, hath broken down the barriers which hindered our access to God, and the access of his mercy to us; and hath opened, by the blood of Calvary, *a new and living way to the Father.* From the invitation to this way of life, none, no not the most worthless and vile, are excluded. Even those who are slaves of corruption, and prisoners of the curse, are exhorted to lay hold of the great salvation. No sins can surpass the merit of our Lord Jesus. The grace of God, that reigns by his cross, is never so gracious, never shines with such glorious splendor, as when she holds back the arm of justice, rushes through the fire of wrath, snatches the criminal as a brand out of

the burning, and heaps countless blessings on his head.

This doctrine, so rich with instruction and comfort, we should never forget. It is at all times important; at all times needful. Particularly in seasons of wrath, it is the precious doctrine which brightens the gloom of guilt, and revives expiring hope. The prophet, by his own example, has taught us the truth, and how to employ it; for the text implies,

Lastly, That *when the Lord is dealing with us in wrath, mercy is our* ONLY *plea.*

As sinners we have no claim of right to any of God's benefits. Fallen, by apostasy, from our state of probation, we cannot acquire, by our own obedience, a title to the blessings which were promised in the covenant of works. It is, therefore, of infinite moment to our most valuable interests, not only to confess with our mouths, but to feel in our hearts, that we lie at mercy. Above all, upon a day of fasting and humiliation, it accords not with our circumstances and profession, to foster the opinion that God will forgive our iniquities, and receive us into favor, on account of our sincere, though imperfect services. Who is he that presumes upon the sincerity and goodness of a heart which the spirit of inspiration has pronounced *deceitful above* ALL *things, and desperately wicked?* Who is he, that would offer to his Crea-

tor, a righteousness which has been rejected already *as filthy rags?* Know, vain man, that every expectation which does not rest upon mercy, mere mercy, undeserved mercy, is more perishing than the fleeting cloud. Thou must bow to sovereignty. "*The loftiness of man shall be brought down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted.*" Every durable comfort; every solid joy; every hope that will abide the rude shock of death, or the burning trial of the judgment-day, is built upon this divine assurance, not that with us there is *merit*, but that *with the Lord there is mercy.*

With these principles, that are evidently implied in the text, is intimately connected,

2. The *temper* with which it becomes us to present the prayer of the prophet.

If we admit, (and who dares deny?) that the Lord is speaking to us in wrath; and that our only refuge is his mercy; we cannot resist the conviction, that an essential part of the temper which should influence us in suing for mercy, consists in *an ingenuous confession of guilt.*

To frame excuses for our rebellion against the Majesty in the heavens; or to soften down, by partial tenderness, our heinous violations of the divine law, discovers an ignorant mind, and an unhumbled heart: It is, in effect, to say, *the ways of the Lord are not equal.* We may, indeed, imagine ourselves hardly treated: but if we

compare the best of our fancied claims to the indulgence of God, with the tremendous charges he may justly bring against us, the lips of murmur will be silenced; the rising discontent suppressed; and, overwhelmed with deep confusion, we will be constrained to acknowledge the rectitude of Jehovah's appointments. The *Judge of all the earth*, who invariably does right, must *be justified when he speaketh, and be clear when he judgeth.* Before his equal bar *every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty. Wo*, then, *to him that striveth with his Maker.* The wisest, the safest, the most honorable conduct, in this hour of peril, is *to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God*, and to plead guilty to the heavy accusations which are written, in large and luminous characters, on his providential dealings. He virtually addresses us in this piercing language, *Have I not nourished and brought you up as children, and have ye not rebelled against me?* If we act honestly, we must reply, *Truth, Lord!* Did I not *make known unto you my holy sabbath, and command you precepts, statutes, and laws, and give you my good spirit to instruct you; and have ye not been disobedient, and cast my law behind your backs, and wrought great provocations?* Truth, Lord! *Did I not deliver you*, for your sins, *into the hand of your enemies who vexed you: and in the time of your trouble, when you cried unto me, did*

I not hear you from heaven, and, according to my manifold mercies, give you saviors, who saved you out of the hand of your enemies; and after you had rest, did you not do evil again before me? Truth, Lord! *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, and we have done wickedly: Neither have our* rulers, our magistrates, our priests, nor our citizens, *kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments; for they have not served thee in the large and fat land which thou gavest them; neither turned they from their wicked works.*

But let us not suppose, my brethren, that we fulfill our duty by a *general* confession of guilt. We plead not for mercy with a proper temper, unless we individually bring home the charge of guilt to our own consciences. Our national sins are enormous; their cry ascends to the very heavens: and we all have had our share in them. Let us every one turn his eyes in upon his own heart, and, willing to know the worst of his character, ask, with solemn impartiality, "*What have I done?*" There is no citizen present, who will not find, upon fair inquiry, that he has abundant reason to say, not only as a *man*, but as an *American, God be merciful to me a sinner.* The public iniquity is, in fact, an accumulation of private transgressions. They are the drops of individual contrition, which constitute the flood of

national repentance; and if we expect ever to see a general reformation, we must pray every one for *himself*, *O Lord, in wrath remember mercy.*

These reflections lead us directly to observe, that a part, a chief part, of the temper which should predominate in our applications to the mercy-seat, is a fervent desire, that the Lord would remove from us, first of all, the *guilt* for which he is now punishing us.

If our humiliation, this day, proceeds from a dread of evil, rather than from a cordial hatred of the sin which is the parent of all evil, we mock God; we wound our own souls; we prepare for ourselves a more terrible condemnation. The God of holiness will never deem himself honored by the feigned devotion of those who *roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues*—who grieve, not because *he* is offended and insulted, but because *they* are chastised—who are deterred from the indulgence of their lusts, only by the fear of vengeance; and who will probably return, when their alarm subsides, to those unhallowed practices which they *now* affect to renounce. Unpardoned sin is a perennial source of sorrow: and it is is but a small consolation to be freed from an existing plague, while an angry cloud, charged with ten thousand woes, hovers over us, and threatens every moment to burst in curses on our heads. *Acquaint thyself* NOW *with him and be at*

peace; haste, for pardon, to the blood of sprinkling, and leave it to the wisdom and sovereignty of God, to remove, in his own good time, the rod of affliction.

Finally: In pleading for mercy, we should be anxious that the Lord would *sanctify* his providence: that is, would bless it as an effectual mean of rendering our hearts more tender, and our lives more holy.

Chastisements unimproved, swell, in proportion to their severity, the guilt of an individual or a people; and are a prelude to calamities doubly dreadful. If men will not *learn righteousness* when God's *judgments are abroad in the earth*— if they *will not behold the majesty of the Lord*, and when his hand is lifted up, obstinately refuse to see it; he may say, in righteous indignation, *Let them alone:* LET THEM FILL UP THE MEASURE OF THEIR INIQUITIES: And what the consequence may be, none can tell, but he who knows perfectly the evil of sin, and the limits of his own forbearance. Should we revert to our former sloth and impiety, after this solemn warning from the God of heaven, our condition will be worse, much worse, than before. He may, indeed, permit us to enjoy tranquility for a while; but, in the mean time, he is storing a magazine of fury. If his unexampled goodness do not *lead us to repentance*, we will *treasure up to ourselves wrath*

against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. For aught we can tell, the period may be near, when seven thunders shall utter our doom; and seven vials pour out upon us their united plagues. In the day of our distress, God may stand afar off: *When we spread forth our hands, he may hide his eyes from us; yea, when we make many prayers, he may not hear.* He may strike into our souls the chill of death, by addressing us in this style of affronted patience, *Because I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you.*

The facts and the doctrines on which we have been meditating, suggest, very plainly, the *improvement* we ought to make of them.

If wrath is upon us from the Lord, every man of reflection will feel that it becomes us to be very *serious.*

My brethren, God does not trifle with us, and he will not permit us to trifle with him. His government is not a phantom, nor his judgments a farce. Both are awful realities: Sooner or later shall every accountable creature know, that the

former cannot be rejected, nor the latter despised, with impunity. The divine law is a serious thing: sin, which is a transgression of the law, is also a serious thing: and *that* death, which is the wages of sin, is as serious a thing as either: And now, that we have violated the law; have made ourselves sinners; are obnoxious to the penalty of the law, and have before our eyes a signal proof of the Lord's anger against the very sins with which we are chargeable; surely, surely we ought to be serious. To be careless and indifferent when the cry of anguish pierces our ears, is cruelty: To frolic on the brink of ruin, is madness. The Spirit of God has marked it as one of the last stages of human obduracy, when men have *the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and the pipe, and wine, in their feasts; but regard not the doing of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.* God forbid that we should imitate the folly described by the prophet; "*And in that day,*" a day of wrath, "*did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and, behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine;*" a conduct which proclaimed more loudly than any words, the maxim of the libertine; *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.* May the wo denounced against such offenders, penetrate our

inmost souls! *Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you,* TILL YE DIE, *saith the Lord God of hosts.*

But let none mistake the intention of these remarks, or pervert their use. If we are called from unseasonable inattention and levity, we are not called to the sullenness, the gloom, the inaction, of despondence. We must be serious, but not idle. And one of the most profitable purposes for which we can improve the subject we have been considering, is, *a strict examination of our own characters.*

My brethren, the dispensations of Divine Providence proclaim, as with the voice of an archangel's trump, *Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* Are we prepared to meet him in confidence, and with comfort? Pause, ye votaries of pleasure—Interrupt, ye gay, the round of vanity—suspend, ye men of business, the anxieties of gain; and retreat, for a while, into your own bosoms: summon your consciences before that tribunal, the decisions of which are all according to truth; and ask, ask solemnly, for ye know not how soon it may be asked at the bar of God, What arrangements have ye made for an eternal world? Amidst all your acquirements, have ye obtained the *one thing needful?* Amidst all your pursuits, have ye sought *first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness?* Are ye *in Christ Jesus?* Are ye

justified by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit? Have ye devolved the whole weight of your acceptance with the Father, of your perseverance in holiness, and your arrival at glory, on him *who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him?*

To these interrogations very different answers must be given by two classes of hearers. To each of them our subject furnishes a suitable exhortation. To those, who *have a good hope through grace*, it addresses the command of the apostle Peter, *Give all diligence to make your calling and your election sure.* In seasons of wrath it is peculiarly needful for believers to have their faith strengthened; their title to their inheritance fully ascertained, and their way to the possession of it freed from all obstruction. Trim, then, your lamps, ye wise virgins. Gird on your armor, ye soldiers of the living God: *Be sober, be vigilant. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord—Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.* And when ye supplicate for yourselves, intercede for your fellow-citizens, with whom you profess to sympathize. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Say, *Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine he-*

ritage to reproach. Say, *O remember not against us former iniquities: Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. Let the sighing of the prisoner come up before thee; according to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that* seem *appointed to die.* Intercede for your country: say, *Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.* Say, *Forgive our sin, and heal our land. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children: and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands; yea the work of our hands establish thou it.* Intercede for the church of Christ: say, *Do good, in thy good pleasure, unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known: in wrath remember mercy.*

To those who are *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise,* the dispensations of Providence speak in a most alarming style, and the doctrine of the text offers salutary counsel. *Wherewithal,* my brethren, *will* YE *come before the Lord, and bow yourselves before the most high God?* Unprovided with that *robe of righteousness, and those garments of sal-*

vation, without which none can enter *the palace of the king*, what will ye do in the day of visitation? Are ye able to contend with your Maker? Are ye able to *abide the fierceness of his anger?* O put not from you the evil day. Multitudes, of your neighboring city, who were as careless and secure as yourselves, have been hurried away, with scarce a warning, to the bar of God. What assurance have ye that this shall not, very shortly, be your own case? Death is now doing his work among our fellow-citizens; and before we are aware he may *come up into our windows.* Perhaps—God grant that the fear be not realized! perhaps the destroyer has already received his commission to clear these seats of their useless possessors; to cut down the cumberers of the Lord's vineyard; and to cast them into the fire. My brethren, as your souls live, there is but a step between you and death: critical is your condition; and precious your time. Haste, then, *flee for your lives; flee from the wrath to come!* "But whither shall we flee?" Whither? To the mercy-seat! *To the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. To Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins.* This, this is the only channel through which the mercy of God can flow to the sinner: *For there*

is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved. The only alternative is, to receive the Savior, or perish. Receive him without delay. *Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.* To-day *if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* He has said that *Them who come to him he will in no wise cast out.* Having such high encouragement, fasten your hope on his atoning blood; throw yourselves undeservedly upon his precious merits; and plead, *O Lord, in wrath remember mercy. Amen.*

MERCY REMEMBERED IN WRATH.

A SERMON,

The substance of which was preached on the 19th of February, 1795,

OBSERVED THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES,

AS A DAY OF

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER.

SERMON III.

MERCY REMEMBERED IN WRATH

PSALM CIII. 10.

He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

MY BRETHREN,

THE providence of God, which threatened the speedy punishment of our crimes, lately called us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand. We came to his sanctuary in the character of penitents; we professed to afflict our souls for the evil we had done in his sight; we addressed his throne in the language of contrition; we implored respite; we implored pardon. Abstinence from bodily food, in the self-denial of fasting, we employed as the symbol of inward bitterness, and as an aid in the mortification of sin.

For purposes of a different nature do we this day tread the courts of the Most High. *The oil of joy* succeeds to *mourning;* and *the garment of praise* to *the spirit of heaviness.* We come to *offer unto God thanksgiving:* We come to celebrate his recent benefits: We come to kindle on the altar of common gratitude the mingled incense of our praise.

But where, may some ask, where is the propriety of bringing, at this time, *the sacrifices of joyfulness?* Is Jehovah's controversy with our guilty land completely removed? Is *his anger turned away, and his hand stretched out* no longer? Have our citizens, *breaking off their sins by repentance, returned to him from whom they have deeply revolted?* From his judgments which are abroad in the earth, do they appear to have learned righteousness? And has the Spirit of grace shed down the large effusion of his quickening and purifying influence? Would to God, my brethren, that facts could warrant a prompt and exulting affirmative. But truth obliges us to confess, with blushes, that we have little reason to boast of rectified principle and new obedience. We are still a *sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers; children that are corrupters; we have forsaken the Lord; we have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; we have gone away backward*

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. But this cannot supersede the necessity, nor lessen the propriety, of thanksgiving. It is rather one of the most cogent reasons for singing aloud of his mercy. Besides, we are to consider, that within a short time the procedure of holy Providence, contrary to our most distressing fears, hath, in matters intimately affecting our happiness, assumed a more favorable aspect. Therefore, although we are not authorized to conclude that the Lord is pacified towards us for all that we have done, yet we may and ought to utter abundantly the memory of his goodness; we may and ought to thank him, and thank him publicly, that *he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

The text, which significantly describes our condition, asserts, that God hath not treated us according to our desert; and strongly implies that this dispensation is replete with singular kindness—subjects which lead to discussion profitable in itself, and obviously corresponding with the design of this day.

I. Let us endeavor to be deeply impressed with the *fact*, that the Lord hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

How numerous our sins are, how black their atrocity, how peculiar and malignant their aggravations, it is neither my intention nor my business to state. This would lead us again over the ground of which, not long ago, we had occasion to take a sorrowful review. That we have merited those varied plagues by which the Eternal scourges a rebellious and stiff-necked people, we may not deny, for we have already confessed. The symptoms of their approach startled the most thoughtless; our hearts throbbed with painful apprehension; and we hastened to the mercy-seat to deprecate those evils of which even the remote appearance filled us with terror. That he *hath* had compassion; that in wrath he *hath* remembered mercy, we are all witnesses: for we are all living monuments of his forbearance. The gathering darkness hath not been permitted to concentrate and pour down its tempest. It hath ceased, in part, to overcloud our sky; and, in some degree at least, hath yielded to brighter prospects.

Without dwelling minutely on that kind interposition which hath checked the ravages of disease, hath calmed the tumult of the presaging breast, and recalled to languishing multitudes the glow and the vigors of health—Without expatiating on the successes which have attended an enterprise against the western foe: successes

that make some amends for the dishonor and loss of former defeats; and encourage us to hope for a solid and permanent peace, which may prevent the effusion of blood hereafter—without insisting on any of those things which, however estimable, occupy a middle or inferior place in the scale of national benefit, allow me to direct your attention to two distinguishing blessings—preservation from foreign war, and deliverance from domestic discord.

It is a mysterious arrangement of the government of God, by which he makes one sin the corrective and the punishment of another. If nation rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom —if dissensions grow into animosities; and animosities, inflamed by mutual irritation, break out into open and destructive hostility; let it not be supposed that such deplorable events proceed merely from the jarring interests, and jarring passions of men. Ambition of power, the fascinations of grandeur, or the lust of fame, often set the world on fire, and swell the huge catalogue of human miseries. *Wars and fightings come from our lusts.* But in these disasters a higher agency is concerned. God, who *sitteth upon the floods*, God, *whose kingdom ruleth over all;* God, who causeth even *the wrath of man to praise him*, marks out the path of the warrior, selects the objects of his prowess, and

fixes the bounds of his triumph. *His* design may be evil; *his* aggressions unprovoked, and, from *him*, unmerited, by those against whom they are directed; every step of *his* procedure may be scored with crimes; and yet God, unimpeachably righteous, brings light out of this darkness; by such evil instruments accomplishes wise, and good, and holy ends; and when he has accomplished them, he visits the iniquities of the instruments themselves, and breaks them to pieces with his rod of iron. This truth is painted in strong colors by the prophet Isaiah: *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. Wherefore, it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and I have put down the inhabitants like a va-*

liant man. And my hand hath found, as a nest, the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth, and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself as if it were no wood. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire,—and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day. Isaiah x. 7—17.

This is one of those *terrible things in righteousness*, by which, when he *cometh forth out of his place, God punishes the inhabitants of the earth.* Thus sinners become to each other angels of cursing; and thus he delegates one guilty nation, as ministers of his quarrel to another; and sends them to execute his threatenings upon their brethren in transgression. The sword never comes to devour, but when he appoints it; for every fatal thrust, it hath his high commission; and with the blood which rushes through the portals of death, does he write the crimson history of his wrath.

Brethren, need I remind you, that this dreadful plague was at our doors? Have ye forgotten the chilling anticipations which lately obtruded themselves, unsought, on your minds? Already did the frenzied imagination re-display those scenes of horror of which the remembrance will live with our memories! Already did we hear the burst of hostile thunder; already did we see our temples desolated; our dwellings sinking in the flames, and our families fugitives from the burning ruin!

But the storm has blown over, and done no harm. The sound of alarm, retreating from our shore, grew fainter and fainter, till it expired on the listening ear. No angry banner waves in our eye; no cruel foe ravages our possessions. All is serene; all secure. This day is witness that peace dwells in our land, and enjoys the quiet exercise of her confirmed reign. Give glory to him who hath commanded the deliverance! *O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of* HIS *praise to be heard; who holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.*

Tremendous as foreign war is, it is yet preferable to domestic discord. Internal union is the bond of social strength. When mutual confidence hath fled; and coldness, and jealousies, and opposition come in its place; when professed anxiety for the public welfare degenerates into

the strife of partial policies; and unanimity of measures gives way to the violence of faction, the firmest sinews of the national energy are cut, and the richest veins of national prosperity, sluiced.

It was a serious thing, my brethren, for our country, to see, in a neighboring state, four large counties, including great numbers of inhabitants, throw off submission to the law, and rise in the contumacy of revolt. The season at which this ominous event happened, was peculiarly unfavorable. Pressed on one side with savage depredations; vexed, on another, with daring and shameless encroachment; fretted and soured with maritime insult and plunder; torn, at the same time, with intestine feud; and ill provided with the means of defense, we invited the assaults of any adversary who was in a condition to improve our disunion and perplexity. Nor was it easy to calculate what would be the extent of the calamity, or what its issue. Men of similar habits, and in similar circumstances, readily unite in similar undertakings. Cherished by the wicked assiduity of those sons of Belial, who had been industrious in creating it, the dissension, spreading like a flame through the dried leaves of autumn, might have divided the children of America, not into the parties of opinion, but into the armies of civil war. Despots would have exulted in this consequence, as it would have ruined

the fairest experiment which the sun ever beheld, of a government reared on the equal rights of men. But, to their confusion, and our triumph, the tumult has subsided. The temperate yet firm; the vigorous, yet unbloody manner in which this rebellion was subdued, is fraught with delight to ourselves, and furnishes a useful lesson to mankind. It is the victory of principle over passion, of order over confusion, of laws over licentiousness.

Such a joyful issue of such an afflictive commotion, has filled united America with admiration and applause. To those patriots who, to enforce the sovereignty of the law, exchanged the comforts of domestic life for the rigors of military service, the tribute due to their spirited exertion is cheerfully paid. Above all, our eyes involuntarily fasten on THAT MAN, whose timely application of the severe but salutary discipline intrusted to his prudence, was the happy means of restoring peace—on THAT MAN, whom God hath honored to be the instrument of countless blessings to this land; whose name will live, and whose memory will be revered, when the blighting eye of malignity is sealed up in darkness, and the tongue of calumny fettered with the irons of death.

The facts now mentioned are luminous events, which, at present, absorb in their lustre all other political incidents relating to us. They cannot but fix in astonishment the gaze of the most

careless; and impress the hearts of the most hardened. How powerful obligations to gratitude to our God are created by such benefits, will appear from contemplating the *singular mercy of that providential dispensation from which they flowed.* The illustration of this mercy is the

II. Second branch of our subject.

Sources of illustration are numerous and fruitful—you will all acknowledge,

1. *The divine clemency which has distinguished us from other nations.*

Several countries on the eastern shores of the Atlantic, have scarcely time to breathe, much less to recruit, from the wounds and sufferings of one war, before they are precipitated into another. It is a foul stain on the civilization of Europe, as well as an awful judgment for her sins, that she is almost continually weltering in blood. Her infatuated sons fly to arms, and slaughter each other, as the caprice or the politics of their tyrants ordain. Besides two rash and formidable preparations* which began in bravado, and ended in expense; the present† are two of six‡ wars

* The Russian and Spanish armaments in Britain; the former of which was equipped to aid the Turks against Russia, and the latter, to fight the Spaniards for the privilege of killing "whales in the South Seas, and wild cats at Nootka Sound."

† The war of France against the combined powers; and of Poland against Russia and Prussia.

‡ In addition to the wars mentioned in the preceding note, there have been

1. The war of Sweden with Russia. 2. That of Russia and the

which, more generally or partially, have flooded their curses on Europe, in less than ten years. Wars, all of them wicked, most of them mad, and none of them necessary. At this moment, some of the fairest fields that ever rejoiced the eye or repaid the labor of man, instead of being cultivated by the husbandman and the vine-dresser, are trodden down by the martial steed, and strewed with the bodies of the slain. *Come behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He cuts off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.*

How preferable, my brethren, is our condition! How gentle the dispensations of God towards us! It is now above one hundred and sixty years since the chief settlement of this country; and, excepting Indian hostilities on the frontier, we have not been engaged in war more than three or four times at farthest; and have never been compelled to it, but either by foreign connection, or the rigor of foreign exaction. Why do we prosper whilst other lands are covered with desolation? Why does not the sword thin our families, and hew down our gallant youth, their

Emperor with the Turks. 3. That of the Emperor with the Netherlands. 4. That of Poland and Russia, in 1792—all within the short space of eight years; viz. from 1786 to 1794! besides the troubles in Holland, and some other disorders of less importance.

parents' pride, and their country's hope? Why are we permitted to till our grounds without molestation, and to eat the fruit of our industry? Why, through the medium of commerce, to keep up an amicable and lucrative intercourse with distant places? Why to foster the arts of peace, which refine the manners, and improve the mind? Why to assemble, without interruption or fear, in the house of God; to sing his praises, to supplicate his favor, to learn the words of everlasting life? Is it because we are better than others? No, in no wise. We merit a harsher lot; but the Lord hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.—It is undeserved mercy; therefore, Hallelu-Jah!

2. The *imminent danger* in which we lately were, highly exalts the mercy of our deliverance.

However imagination might depict the horrors of war, before they had a real existence, yet the strong apprehension of their approach was not chimerical: affairs, both abroad and at home, were fast verging to a dreadful crisis. Various indignities and spoliations, by land and sea, unprovoked, in the midst of painful exertions to maintain our tranquillity, bespoke, too evidently, designs unfriendly to our happiness. It is an agreeable dream of benevolence to suppose that if the plans of confederated oppression had succeeded, we should have been unmolested. When

we consider the grudge entertained by most of the establishments of the old world against these states, for breaking the political spell, by which, for ages, man had been enchanted; and showing him what he *is*, and what he *ought to be*, in society; it is a more probable conjecture, that the conquerors, flushed with victory, would have turned their arms hither, and endeavored, by one mighty effort, to crush the nursery of freedom, and extirpate from the globe its generous plants.

Connectively with symptoms of disaffection abroad, we must view the unruly and turbulent dispositions of many at home. In every community there are multitudes who have a much greater share of good intention than discernment. Their honest credulity, unguided by judgment and untempered with caution, draws them into the plots of others whose less upright principles take an eager advantage of their simplicity. An appeal to popular prejudice, calculated to inflame popular passion, is an engine which craft always employs, and generally finds effectual for enlisting both under the banners of intrigue. There will ever be some, in all parts of the world, to whom, from natural unhappiness of mind, or from less venial causes, order will be imprisonment, and peace a torture—some, who sicken to see the gallant vessel riding securely at anchor, or flitting before the favoring gale, and

who pray for an adverse blast to dash her on the reef, that while the crew perish in the waters, they may pillage the wreck. The mischievous projects of such as these, aided by the imprudent zeal of others, are sufficient, in ordinary cases, to force almost any nation into war. And when we add to their machinations the external exasperating treatment which gave union to their counsels, and color to their pretexts, it seems little short of a miracle that we have escaped. We stand astonished at the precipice over which we were nearly hurried—a precipice that would have plunged us into evils for which their immediate authors could never have atoned: no, not though they wept in sackcloth the remainder of their lives: no, not though their heads were waters, and their eyes fountains of tears; tears streaming in perpetual succession, and every drop imbittered with the gall of heart-wringing penitence. It was God's unspeakable mercy that interfered to save us: and the greater our danger, the more beneficent was the interference, and the more precious the salvation. Surely he hath not dealt with us after our sins.—therefore, again Hallelu-Jah!

3. The *complicated evils which attend war*, whether foreign or domestic, show, in an amiable and affecting light, the mercy which has prevented them. These evils, both political and moral,

it would require a volume fully to enumerate and to display. Nor, were it possible, would it be improper here to unfold them. I might call your attention to its pernicious influence on the population of your country, not only by increasing the difficulty of comfortable subsistence, but by the shocking waste it occasions of human life—I might remind you, (for you would not demand proof,) that it breaks up the happiest arrangements of society—that it arrests the progress of the arts—that it retards and ruins the improvements of science—that it weakens, and often destroys, the efforts of commercial, manufacturing, and agricultural genius—that it creates perplexing revolutions in the state of property—that it impedes, if it does not frustrate, the regular administration of civil and criminal justice—that it frequently subjects many of the citizens to the stern jurisdiction and the summary proceedings of martial law—that, while it puts a stop to national improvement, it dries up the ordinary streams of national resource—that it oppresses the community with odious, but necessary exactions, in order to maintain their military establishments, and give energy to their hostile operations—and that it generally entails upon them a burden which the wisdom and exertion of ages may be unable to throw off.

The moral evils which spring from war, are neither fewer nor less baneful than the political. As it nurtures all the fierce and violent passions, it wrests from society the benefit of many advances in civilization, and drives it, in a retrograde motion, back towards barbarism. By interrupting the quiet pursuit of enlarged and generous education, it keeps the young in ignorance, and withholds from them the means of respectability and usefulness. In hindering general and uniform attendance on the social worship of God, it suspends the benign influence of the Christian sabbath, relaxes the bonds of religious duty—deadens the acute sensibilities of conscience—and tends to subvert the steady dominion of moral principle. Standing armies, moreover, and navies, are seminaries of vice. There are some examples, glorious examples, of men who hold fast their integrity even here. But in general the predominance of iniquity is so great, that the virtue of most is quickly contaminated, and blended with the common mass of corruption. Here the profligate and profane tutor each other in the arts of impiety and debauch. Infrequency of pure example lessens its efficacy; while freedom from pious restraint gives the rein to the more worthless propensions of the heart. Wickedness generates infidelity, and infidelity emboldens wickedness. Hence, as from a root, unbelief in

speculation, and immorality in practice, are propagated in every direction, and scatter their poison to a prodigious extent. Besides all this, with men who are accustomed to works of death, the life of man loses its value. And this is one of the chief causes of that inexcusable, that atrocious, that detestable crime, the murder of single combat—a crime which bids equal defiance to laws, human and divine; and which spills the blood of a friend, to maintain a point of frivolous honor, or to gratify the impulse of diabolical revenge. To add no more, an army is almost as dangerous when disbanded, as it is expensive and troublesome when organized. Men who live in idleness when they are not called to the activity of military duty, who are provided for without any thought of their own, who have acquired habits of plunder as well as of sloth, can with difficulty apply to laborious occupations. These render us unsafe in the midst of prosperity: these furnish the street with thieves, the highway with robbers, and the dungeon with criminals. It is the ignominy of not a few who escape the perils of the field, to fall under the stroke of the executioner; and the laurels which the soldier won, are entwined by the ruffian round his gibbet.*

* From this general censure, the body of the late revolutionary army of America are entitled to an honorable exception.

Such are some of the evils common to all wars, but war among brethren has peculiar miseries. Experience, that faithful monitor, had shown that the wounds inflicted by civil war are far deeper, and of more difficult cure, than any that can be received from the hand of foreign violence. The murderous tempers which, in other wars are indulged, in this, are wrought up to the height of fury. Resentments are more keen, revenge more implacable, and hatred more lasting. The aggressor is more injurious, and the injured more unforgiving. Amidst mutual reproaches and accusations of violating the most sacred ties, they appear to each other wretches unworthy of esteem, and incapable of faith. Reconciliation is hard to be effected; and, when effected, is scarcely ever sincere. The body politic may, indeed, reassume its healthful complexion; but the poison, rankling within, is ready to burst out with renewed violence: for we find, in fact, that when men have once broken the cords of amity, they are easily impelled to repeat the sacrilege. It is, moreover, a melancholy reflection, that it makes little difference to the community at large, how the quarrels of its contending parties are decided. Whoever is victorious, or whoever is vanquished, all suffer. While they struggle against each other, they rend the vital system by which all are nourished; and the triumph of any

over the rest, is but the success of a mad conspiracy against themselves. Nor does the mischief end here. In silent ambush the common foe marks the origin of disunion, its progress, and its consequences. He patiently waits for the moment of opportunity; and when the combatants, exhausted and fainting, are incapable of resistance, he springs from his concealment, and seizes them for his prey. We cannot be sufficiently thankful, that the mercy of God, in keeping the great body of our citizens united, has kept us from self-procured ruin.

4. The divine goodness, which to-day we celebrate, is rendered still more affecting, *by contrasting it with our own stubborn and rebellious conduct.*

In the course of his providence, God has given us *line upon line, and precept upon precept;* but line upon line, and precept upon precept, were in vain. Alternate judgment and love, neither awed into submission, nor allured to penitence. Hardened in transgression, we persisted to provoke him, to defy his threatenings, and trample on his bounties. Nor have we any reason to believe that his former dispensations, whether of terror or of joy, have been really sanctified. Guilty, but not abashed; afflicted, but not reformed; neither humbled by chastisement, nor softened by kindness, we were entitled to no favor at the

hand of God. Pregnant with great futurities, the phenomena of his providence bid us to prepare for their development; and each succeeding day, bringing with it new discouragements, led us to contemplate an issue as mournful as it was near. But while at a distance the thunders rolled: while our heavens blackened, and the wo-fraught clouds stretched over our heads; while our citizens, some in trembling, and others in sullen suspense, were expecting their fate, God—for surely it was the work of no created wisdom or power—God sent help from his holy hill. The arm of vengeance, raised to hurl its wrathful bolt, he suddenly arrested. Through the opening gloom, the light of his deliverance beamed; and so brilliant was the interposition, that nothing but atheistic impiety could forbear exclaiming, *This salvation is from the Lord!* Towards other nations he hath exercised less patience. Their sin, in itself, was no greater than our own; their means of knowledge were inferior; nor were they so often admonished with solemn and pointed rebuke; yet they have perished by the frown of the Eternal, and their memorial is blotted from under heaven. But *we* are spared, are protected, are prospered! Americans, the lenity is divine! Because the Lord delighteth to do us good, is he thus indulgent. He prevents us with his mercies. He surrounds us with his compassions: he loads

us with his benefits. "Nay," said his reprieving sentence, "slay them not. Let grace be magnified in their preservation. Though they have richly merited the punishment which hangs over them, and merited a thousandfold more, though they have hitherto set at nought my instruction, let the dispensation of love heap coals of fire upon their heads." My brethren, that heart which is not, in any degree, melted by such goodness, must lie under the curse of triple hardness; and if it have no influence in leading to repentance, every possible excuse will be taken from us; and when God arises to judgment, we will stand, without an extenuating plea, before the bar of his righteousness.

Finally, by the continuance of peace, *numbers have access to the privileges of the gospel, who, otherwise, would not only have been deprived of them, but would have fallen a sacrifice to the sword of war:* and this is a display of the mercy of God, which, on the present occasion, we may not overlook.

A sinner receives a boon for which he cannot be sufficiently thankful, when he is permited to have *a nail in God's holy place*, and to attend on the ministrations of life: when his days are lengthened out in the enjoyment of those precious means by which pardon is communicated to the guilty, and purity infused into the vile: by

which the slaves of Satan are made Christ's free men; and felons of the pit, constituted citizens of heaven, and heirs of God. Had the removal of providential restraint left us as ready to wage war, as the intemperance of some and the wickedness of others were to urge it, many who now worship in the house of prayer would have been numbered with the dead. Many, to whom the redemption of the blessed Jesus and all the glories of his covenant are freely offered, would have been this day writhing in the place of torment. Unprepared to die, multitudes would have gone to death, and in one hour been swept, by hundreds, into the world of spirits; all their hopes of mercy blasted, and their immortal souls undone forever.

And now, my brethren, since *the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad*, how shall we express our gratitude? What shall we *render to him for all his benefits?* Taking that *cup of salvation*, which his own hand hath tendered to us, let us *call upon his name.* This, beyond controversy, is an immediate and essential part of our duty, *to pay him explicit and public homage: to recognize, by devout and marked acknowledgment, our dependence on his favor, and the blessings we have reaped from his protection.*

There is a religion of society, as such; a tribute of reverence which it owes to the living

God. Formed under his auspices, and nurtured by his care, preserved by his power, and replenished with his bounty, he requires from it, on these accounts, social worship and the social vow. The honor of his sovereign rule he cannot relinquish, and the confession of it we may not withhold. It is true, that our excellent chief magistrate, in those critical circumstances into which he was thrown, by the danger of foreign war, and the madness of insurrection among ourselves, displayed, in a conspicuous manner, those governmental virtues which are at once the duty and the glory of his official pre-eminence. The other magistrates, who acted in concert with him, imbibed the spirit of their station, and showed themselves *a terror to evil-doers.* The citizens, by whose military co-operation, their patriotic efforts were carried into complete effect, brought into splendid action the principles of men, who enjoy true liberty, and know how to value and defend it. They have all deserved well of their country; but their exertions, sublime and heroic as they were, would have been utterly fruitless without the countenance of HIM, who is the *governor among the nations.* Let us not, therefore, rest in second causes, nor limit our praise to human instruments. Let us not disregard them, but look beyond them. Let us make our boast in God, who, in the day of trouble, covered us

with the shield of his omnipotence. *If it had not been the* LORD *who was on our side*, now may Americans say, *if it had not been the* LORD *who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the* LORD, *who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the* LORD *who made heaven and earth.* Therefore, *Give unto the* LORD, *O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the* LORD *glory and strength. Give unto the* LORD *the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the* LORD *in the beauty of holiness; fear before him, all the earth!*

Another becoming expression of our gratitude to God, for the goodness which we are met to commemorate, is to *keep at a cautious distance from the "arrogance of prosperity."*

If we are elevated to a dignified rank among the nations of the earth; if our *goodly heritage* contains a larger proportion of freedom and happiness, than has fallen to the lot of others: if our privileges, civil, religious, and political, secured *under the shadow of the Almighty*, have

hitherto repelled the weapons of every assailant, and have received recent and strong confirmation, let us beware of *dealing foolishly*, and vaunting away our mercies. To communities, not less than to individuals, insolence is the forerunner of shame. *Pride*, saith the wise man, *goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Interest combines with duty to enforce compliance with the injunction of inspired prudence, *Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck, for promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south: but God is the judge—he putteth down one, and setteth up another.* The rebellious, who exalt themselves, he will teach to bend before his authority, by the sad experience of his displeasure. Without HIS direction, the sagacity of the profoundest politician is but another name for stupid infatuation. He *turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.* Without HIM, the most intrepid *bow down under the prisoners, and fall under the slain.* Abandoned by HIM, the most stable fabrics of earthly contrivance totter on their bases, moulder into dust, and become the sport of every wanton breeze. Let us not flatter ourselves, that however others suffer, we may safely walk after the imagination of our own hearts. We have no charter of immunity in sin. Without discrimination, *the haughty shall be*

humbled, and the froward cut off; *for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Once more: If we would demonstrate our gratitude to God for averting those evils which we could not have shunned, let us *study to be holy in all manner of conversation.*

Sincere profession is best evinced by the simplicity of pure obedience. Genuine gratitude will ever be accompanied by an unaffected desire of pleasing, and a fear equally unaffected of offending our benefactor. Be not deceived. If men love God, they will keep his commandments; if they are thankful for his benefits, they will respect his law. Sins of enormous turpitude are still chargeable upon us, and sooner or later the day of visitation will come. More than once or twice we have confessed our guilt, and vowed amendment. On this very subject does the Most High expostulate with us. He calls us by his providence to realize our confessions, to pay what we have vowed. Let us implore the grace, and attempt the duty of penitence, while space is given us to repent. The Holy One of Israel will not be mocked with empty promises. When the hour of judgment arrives, his ear will be deaf to intreaty, and the pleadings of mercy will end. Those floods of ruin, which are now held back by his forbearance, will pour in their waters with augmented fury. Heaven will call

upon earth, and earth reply to heaven, in conspiring the destruction of irreclaimable transgressors. Improve the means of obtaining present peace and of insuring final salvation, while ye have opportunity. Before the season of acceptance expire, flee to that Lord Jesus who is the *hiding-place from the storm, and the covert from the tempest;* and prove that ye receive the Savior by walking in him. HE HATH SHOWED THEE, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD; AND WHAT DOTH THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO DO JUSTLY, TO LOVE MERCY, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH THY GOD? *Amen.*

HOPE FOR THE HEATHEN.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

BEFORE THE

NEW YORK MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

At their Annual Meeting, November 7, 1797.

SERMON IV.

HOPE FOR THE HEATHEN.

ISAIAH XXV. 6, 7.

The LORD *of Hosts—will destroy, in this mountain, the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.*

THE exercise of divine mercy towards man is coeval with his need of it. The shock of the fall was hardly felt; remorse had only begun to prey upon the conscience, and guilt to rally his terrors, when a hope, as consoling as it was unexpected, dawned from heaven upon our revolted race. *I will put*, said God to the tempter, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* In this original promise were included all subsequent revelations concerning the redemption of sinners.

The doctrine of MESSIAH's person, of his sacrifice, of his triumph: together with that vast system of prediction which extends from the beginning to the end of time, and all the corresponding dispensations of the new covenant, are nothing but its regular development. But this being slow as well as regular, and all flesh corrupting his way, the Lord selected the family of Abraham to be, for ages, both the witnesses of his grace, and the depositaries of his truth. To them were committed his living oracles; to them the ordinances of his worship; to them the symbols and doctrines of the great atonement. Among them he deigned to dwell, and to raise up an illustrious line of prophets, who should direct their faith and hope to Jesus the Savior. *To him*, saith Peter, *give* ALL *the prophets witness, that, through* HIS *name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

But though the children of Israel enjoyed these privileges, while other nations were *suffered to walk in their own ways*, they were taught that the covenant of peculiarity should one day be abrogated, and be succeeded by a more general and more glorious economy. *In thee, and in all thy seed, shall* ALL *the nations of the earth be blessed*, was the catholic promise to Abraham their father. As the time of its accomplishment approached, the circle of prophetic vision grew brighter and

larger. Later prophets were enabled to explain the enigmas of their predecessors, and to speak, with precision and clearness, both of the coming of the Messiah, and of the glory that should follow. Isaiah, in particular, appears to have been favored with the most liberal disclosure of the divine purposes. Borne on high, by the revealing Spirit, he sees far beyond the common horizon. The extremes of the earth, and the ages of futurity, are commanded into his view. He sees the *Sun of Righteousness* ascending the heavens, and breaking in upon the thick darkness which enwraps the globe. He sees the fiends of night stretch their foul wings, and fly from the spreading day. He sees the tabernacle of God descending to dwell among men: his eye rolls ardent over the wondrous scene; his bosom heaves with mighty emotions; and when utterance is granted, he bursts forth in the language of the text, *In this mountain will the Lord of Hosts destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.*

The Lord hath not been slack concerning his promise, nor have the words of his servant fallen to the ground. The elementary dispensation of Moses is no more; its shadows have received their substance, and its types their truth, in the person and offices of the WORD *made flesh*. Millions of Gentiles, and among them believers of this as-

sembly, who were once *afar off, are now brought nigh by the blood of Christ*, and are *no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God.*

But though all this hath happened, according to the scriptures, much is yet required to their complete fulfillment. Many families of the earth are still unblest: These too are reserved for the trophies of Emanuel's grace, and are to be subjected to his authority, by the same means which he hath ever employed in converting sinners—the gospel of his cross: three topics of discourse, not less appropriate to the design of our meeting, than plainly suggested by the text: For *in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.*

I. Many families of the earth are yet unblest. They are described as destitute of spiritual and saving knowledge; an idea obviously conveyed by the figures of a VAIL and a COVERING—Darkness, thick darkness, enshrouds their minds, and conceals from them those facts and principles which it most interests them to know and to improve.

Of the nations thus under a vail we reckon four classes:

1. The families which adhere to the *man of sin:* Enticed by his lying wonders, and given up

to strong delusions, they have deviated into the paths of apostasy; they are under the vail of *anti-christian error.*

2. The families of rejected Israel: Having disowned their Messiah when he came, and being disqualified, by judicial blindness, for discerning the real sense of their scriptures, which testify of him; the vail upon their hearts is the vail of *obstinate unbelief.*

3. The families which embrace the doctrines of Mahommed: Turned aside after fables, and amusing themselves with the belief of lying vanities, they are under the vail of *gross imposture.*

4. The families which are usually called Pagan: With no other instruction than the glimmerings of natural reason, and the refracted rays of distant tradition, they are covered with the vail of *deplorable ignorance.*

All these are characterized in the text. But our attention is invited more immediately to those who are without any scriptural revelation. Though true of all, it is of them pre-eminently true, that they are under the double vail of a benighted understanding, and an erring conscience.

God is the source of intellectual light, for he alone is perfect reason. Wisdom in natural things is his gift; much more that wisdom which is spiritual and divine. Loss of ability to discover the chief good, was at once the just reward, and the

native consequence of revolt. For as all spiritual light in the creature beams from the effulgence of the Godhead, whenever sin had intercepted the communion of man with his Maker, the day which shone around him vanished; the gloom of the pit thickened on his soul; and from that accursed hour to this, unless illumined from above, he hath wandered out of the way, and his feet have *stumbled upon the dark mountains.* Does the assertion need proof? Proofs innumerable are furnished by the unhappy heathen. Of the very God who *breathed into their nostrils the breath of life,* on whose bounty they are continual pensioners, and at whose tribunal they must shortly stand, they are fatally ignorant. The *heavens may declare his glory, and the firmament show forth his handy work;* but the Pagans, unaccustomed to decipher their language, and to study their lessons, do not thence derive, in fact, just and clear perceptions even of *his eternal power and Godhead;* far less of his moral character; less still can they learn that he is the only satisfying portion of rational beings; and least of all, that he is accessible to the rebellious. Those general notices of his being which have prevailed in all countries and at all times, have never sufficed to direct men aright in their inquiries after him; nor do they now prevent the most foolish,

the most extravagant, the most abominable conceptions of his nature, and of his operations.

Mistake in the first principles of religion and of morals, must generate uncertainty in all the subordinate principles of both. The rule of obedience is, therefore, at best, a subject of conjecture. What is the genius, measure, and manner of acceptable worship? What are the relative duties of society? Wherein they come short? and What shall be the fruit of transgression? few of the heathen ask, and none can tell. Yet they are under a law of righteousness which saith, *the soul that sinneth shall die.* The origin of their wants and woes they are unable to explore. To the demerit and wages of sin they are utter strangers. The consequences of death they are equally unprepared to meet, or to estimate. All beyond the grave is impenetrable obscurity. Their notions of immortality are less a speculation than a dream. When called hence, they plunge into the world of spirits, unconscious of their destiny; and, till that consummation of sorrows, they grope, at a venture, after the path of life; but grope, alas! in vain; *having the understanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*

Of this intellectual darkness the inseparable companion is an *erring conscience.*

Although light in the understanding does not, of course, imply moral excellence, yet, without the former, there can be none of the latter. To this it is necessary not only that there be a law of morals, but that it be obeyed from a regard to the authority of the lawgiver. Both the lawgiver and the law must, therefore, be known, or conscience will inevitably go astray. The general sentiment of right and wrong, though sufficient, if violated, to leave men without excuse, will by no means conduct to the proper discharge of duty. The fact is notorious, and a glance at the heathen world will descry a thousand monuments of it. To those who have the advantage of revelation, no truths appear more simple and luminous, than that there is but one God, and that he only is entitled to religious homage. Yet how dubious, on these points, were the most celebrated heathen philosophers! how embarrassed their research! how conjectural their opinion! And of that spiritual devotedness which is the life of real religion, they had as little knowledge as the sons of modern unbelief. If from them we turn to the mass of their cotemporaries, or to those who are now in a similar condition, we are startled and shocked to see them *worship and serve the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever.* One poor idolater bows to *the host of heaven;* another trembles before an evil

spirit—Here, he finds his divinities in birds, and beasts, and reptiles; there, he *changes the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man*, and lies prostrate before a deity of stone or of wood, the work of his chisel or his axe. *He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak—he burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied;—yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshipeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god. And none considereth in his heart, neither is their knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, I have also baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it; and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?*

The rites of paganism are worthy of its creed. Instead of a worship, reasonable, reverend, and pure, it exhibits all the frightful varieties of whatever is absurd, or blasphemous, or obscene. Its effects on individual and social character, are precisely such as we might anticipate. Unrestrained by any just apprehensions of God, of his law, or his government, the most baleful passions domi-

neer in the heart, and the most horrible excesses pollute the life. Moral distinctions confounded, the sense of relative obligation extinguished, crimes the most atrocious perpetrated with deliberation, and upon principle, are, among the heathen, the result of being *without God.** If, in the midst of this degradation and these enormities, the thought should occur, *that they who do such things are worthy of death*, a secret horror creeps through the blood; conscience, the scorpion of guilt, strikes his sting into the bosom; forebodings, equally dark and intolerable, the mysterious presentiment of *judgment to come*, harrow up the soul. Whither, in this extremity, shall they turn for succor? All around them is one dreary waste; the reign of silence and of desolation. No friendly voice is borne to the listening ear; no tower of help rises up to the anxious eye. The Comforter, who should comfort their souls, is afar off. They have not heard, like you, of the name of Jesus. They have none to tell them of *redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* And the termination of their mortal course—O brethren, how tremendous! The heavens blacken, the tempest roars, the whirlwind rushes by, down pours the torrent, and without

* Ward's History of the Law of Nations, vol. i.

a refuge, and without a hope, they are swept away in the ruin of the nations that forget God.

Exposed to this melancholy fate, the heathen claim our sympathy; and we eagerly ask, is their doom to such wo irreversibly sealed? Are they shut out forever from the divine compassions? No! To the praise of his grace, Jehovah hath thoughts of mercy, rich mercy, towards them. He will destroy, saith the prophet, *the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations*—a design, the contemplation of which forms the

II. Part of discourse.

From the days of eternity, the Father hath given to Messiah *the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.* The whole earth, therefore, being included in the covenant-grant, shall be filled with the knowledge, and subdued to the obedience of Jehovah. On the maxims of carnal wisdom, the fact is, indeed, impossible, and the expectation wild. To extirpate prejudices implanted in infancy, nurtured by habit, confirmed by example, and consecrated by tradition—to enlighten the stupid idolater, and soften the ferocious savage—to persuade men to despise as contemptible, and loathe as abominable, the objects of their respect and veneration—in a word, to change the opinions, the customs, the characters of nations, and

unite them in a religion, simple, holy, heavenly —a religion opposed to every vicious principle, and every vicious act—a religion which proscribes all human merit, and prostrates all human pride—This is an undertaking which equally defies the policy and the power of man. And the belief that it shall, at any time, be attended with success, furnishes incessant matter of derision to the philosopher, and of sneer to the witling. Their mistake lies in supposing the God who made them to be as foolish and as feeble as themselves, or as little concerned in the salvation of sinners. But we, according to his promise, look for the interposition of his arm, by which, however mean the instruments, this prodigious revolution shall be effected with no less ease than certainty. For,

1. He directs the complicated movements of the universe. However confused and contradictory things may appear to our little minds, with Him whose *understanding is infinite*, there is neither surprise, perplexity, nor chance. *Known unto the Lord are all his works from the beginning of the world.* Not only are the laws of matter his sovereign will, and their operation his continual agency, but the whole system of intellect is under his control. All the discordant passions, interests, designs, which dash, in eternal collision, the affairs of men; all the activities of superior

intelligences, as well the enmity of fiends as the ministry of angels, are combined, in the harmony of Providence, to produce the result which he hath ordained; and hither every occurrence irresistibly tends. *He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.* He causeth *the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.* The unpromising situation, therefore, of the heathen is no obstacle to Israel's God, and should be none to Israel's faith. Be the mountains of difficulty ever so impassable, at his presence they flee away. Let the *nations rage, and the kingdoms be moved*, if he *utter his voice, the earth is melted.*

2. The glory of Messiah is a chief end of the dispensations of Providence.

The vicissitudes of kings and kingdoms, and all the stupendous events which shine in ancient annals, were important chiefly as they served to prepare the way, and to spread the triumphs of Him who was *a light to lighten the Gentiles.* For this God gave the learning of the world to Greece, and its empire to Rome. Both contributed to facilitate and extend the victories of the gospel. The same design is prosecuted in the events which, at this moment, astonish the world. If *nation rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*—if establishments, imposing

from their antiquity, and formidable from their strength, be undermined by the progress of opinion, or shattered by violent explosion—if impiety and ambition, and all the infuriate passions, be permitted to take their course, and scenes of desolation and blood, such as history hath not learnt to record, nor imagination to paint, be opened to our view; it is, that God may destroy the dominion of hell by her own chosen legions, and make them subserve the introduction of that kingdom, which is *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* Thus saith his high decree, *I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until* HE *shall come whose right it is, and I will give it him.*

3. In the scriptures of the prophets, this spiritual revolution by which the *kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*, is frequently predicted and strongly marked. *All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. It shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it: And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths:* So that *from the rising of*

the sun, even unto the going down of the same, his name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto his name, and a pure offering. Is there then a nation that yet *sit in darkness and the shadow of death?* for them *light is sown*, and to them shall *light spring up.* Is there a nation *mad upon their idols?* Jehovah shall *famish all the gods of the earth*, and teach their votaries that he is *the God of salvation*, and that *there is none beside him.* Is there a nation enslaved to superstition, or abused by imposture? He shall *frustrate the tokens of the liars, shall make the diviners mad*, and convert the bondage of their followers into the liberty of his dear children. *Rejoice, therefore, ye Gentiles, with his people. Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it.*

But here occurs an important query. By what means are these predictions to be fulfilled, and these prospects to be realized? The means are prepared; they are extremely simple; they are in your hands—even *the doctrines of the gospel of peace.* And this is the

III. And last topic which I proposed to discuss —In this mountain, saith the prophet, *shall the Lord destroy the vail that is spread over all nations.*

Mount Zion, to which Isaiah refers, is a figure, most familiar to the scripture, of the church of Christ. The apostle Paul, addressing believers

under the New Testament, says, *Ye are come unto Mount Zion.* And the plain sense of the text is, that the Lord will bless the heathen outcasts, by *causing them to pass under the bond of his covenant*, and to inherit the privileges of his house: and this shall be effected, by diffusing among them the glad tidings of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Behold*, saith the sure word of prophecy, *behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that know not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee.*

Our faith on this point will, indeed, provoke the ridicule of a tribe equally vain and licentious, who claim to be the exclusive benefactors of mankind. Rejecting, with opprobrium and insult, the gospel of Christ, they hail, as they speak, a new order of things, and the world is to be regenerated by a reason without conscience, and a philosophy without religion. *No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.* But after all the ostentation and clamor of infidels, what reformation has been wrought by *their* doctrines or by *their* spirit? During forty centuries, reason and philosophy had the world almost to themselves. Where did they overthrow the reign of idolatry? From what vice did they reclaim the nations? One sect of philosophers rose on

the ruin of another, to be itself the aggrandizement of a third. But the world lay still in wickedness, its diseases rankled with increasing fury, and struck deeper and deeper their poisonous roots, under the successive treatment of these "physicians of no value." Eighteen centuries more have nearly elapsed since *God manifested in the flesh put away sin by the sacrifice of himself:* and what has been done in elevating the character, in purifying the morals, in ameliorating the condition of man, that has been done without the aids of his gospel? What countries have the priesthood of unbelief rescued from barbarism? Where have they resisted the influence, or wiped off the shame of profligacy? Where have they promoted either happiness or virtue in public or in private? Whom have they taught to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly? By their fruits ye shall know them.*

How different is the genius, and how different has been the career, of the gospel of Christ! When it was promulged to the heathen, the philosopher pronounced it folly, and stalked disdainfully by the missionary of the cross: yet through the cross did the missionary preach forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting; and lo, the throne of darkness tottered to its fall; the Gentiles *turned from idols to serve the living God.* Abandoning,

at once, their prejudices, their delusions, and their lusts, they *fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.* The face of the world was changed, and the worldling knew not how. No deep speculations, no subtle reasonings, no displays of science, converted the nations. The process was very short, and very simple. Their guilt and their depravity—their certain destruction without pardon and renovation—the grace of God in sending Christ Jesus to die for sinners—his ability to save unto the uttermost—and the freedom of his salvation to the most worthless and vile, are the truths which won the Gentiles to the obedience of Christ. It is this same gospel which, at this hour, turns men *from darkness to light,* and which is destined to "carry the banners of the cross victorious round the globe." Those refined moral disquisitions which, under the garb of sermons, expel vital godliness from the church, will never introduce it among the heathen. Whoever hopes to gain them to the faith, must imitate the apostle Paul. He must *preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Adapted to every clime of the earth, to every stage of society, and to all descriptions of its members, unvailing their real misery, and bringing near the only remedy; dis-

covering, at once, their wants, and the means of supplying them; and, seconded by the energy of the quickening Spirit, this precious gospel fastens on the conscience, melts the heart, thrills the very bones and marrow, and transforms the most obdurate rebel into a willing subject of Jesus Christ. When the *Lord gives testimony to the word of his grace*, it shall have *free course, and be glorified.* No darkness too dismal for it to dispel, no prejudices too obstinate to subdue. *Mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*, this very gospel shall force its way through every physical and every moral difficulty; and in his name and strength shall its messengers cast down imaginations, and every high thought that lifteth itself up against the obedience of Christ. *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and rough places plain. And the glory of the* LORD *shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the* LORD *hath spoken it.*

Come then, my brethren, let us ascend the hill of God; and, aided by the torch of the skies, let us look through the surrounding gloom, to the glories that lie beyond. See! an *angel flies through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.* The standard of SHILOH is

reared: his banner waves on high: the great trumpet is blown: the nations hear, and gather unto him. From the east, from the west, from the north, from the south, they press into the kingdom. On the one hand is the plundering Arab; on the other, the pitiless savage. Here, are the frozen children of the pole; there, the sable tribes of Afric; and yonder, the long disinherited Jew steals silently to his Messiah, weeping as he goes. Hark! the din of arms, and the tumult of battle cease; discord and war retreat back to hell; and again that hymn of angels is heard below, *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men.* The redeemed of the Lord raise their responsive song, *Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our Lord, and the power of his Christ.* Brethren, 'tis no illusion; 'tis "the sober certainty" of truth divine. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this—HALLELUJAH!

AND NOW, dear brethren, shall not the first sentiment of our hearts be a sentiment of gratitude for the grace of God manifested unto us?

Let it never be forgotten, that we, in our ancestors, were among the perishing outcasts. Yet to us hath the word of salvation been sent. Without the gospel of Jesus, we should this day have been burning incense unto idols: without the gospel of Jesus, we should have been strangers to

that blessed hope which gives to life its best relish, and takes from death both his terrors and his sting. O Christian, Christian, remember, that if thou hast escaped the wrath to come, and art made *an heir of God, and a fellow-heir with Jesus Christ*, it is to the praise of sovereign mercy. Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite; and thou mightest have been left, with the Amorites and Hittites, to die in thine iniquity. Yet thou livest; livest unto God; livest for glory; and shalt never come into condemnation, and never taste of the second death. Thrice blessed gospel, which *hath brought life and immortality to light!* Thrice glorious grace, which hath constrained any of us to receive *the truth in the love thereof:* And thrice condescending Savior, who hath *washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.*

2. Since the Lord hath destroyed the vail that was spread over us, by revealing to us the great salvation, let all who have hitherto been indifferent about it be deeply impressed with the duty of embracing it, without delay; and with the sin and danger of neglecting it.

It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save the chief of sinners. On the authority of the most high God, that gospel which we preach

tenders to *you*, my brethren, to *every one* of you, a free grant of this Savior, and, in him, of eternal life; and, suffer me to add with all solemnity, enjoins your acceptance of it at the peril of your souls. This is *his* commandment; this, therefore, is *your* duty, your immediate, your indispensable duty, to believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, that you may be saved. A refusal is the most aggravated crime which you can possibly commit. For it not only approves, with deliberation, all your deeds of rebellion against the God of your mercies, but pours contempt on the riches of his grace, and throws scornfully away the only hope that ever has been, or ever shall be, proposed to guilty men. The experiment, therefore, is not less dangerous than sinful. For if ye reject Christ Jesus, the Lord, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.* And when Jehovah writeth up the people, he will count that ye *trampled under foot the Son of his love, and deemed the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing; and did despite unto the spirit of grace.* Think not that this is a matter of trifling moment. If the gospel, which you hear from day to day, be not the instrument of your conversion to God, it shall be the occasion of your more dreadful condemnation. If not *the savor of life unto life*, most certainly *the savor of death unto death.* The heathen will rise up in the judgment

against you, and will condemn you, for they never shared your means of salvation. The devils will rise up in the judgment against you, and will condemn you, for no Savior was provided for them; and, therefore, whatever be their crimes, the rejection of a Mediator's blood will be none of them. Now, then, *as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.* O that ye may know, in this your day, the *things that belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes!*

3. In the assurance that Jehovah will destroy, by the prevalence of his gospel, the vail spread over the nations, believers may see how little they have to fear for the existence or for the triumph of their religion.

Infidelity, it is true, prospers, and hath assumed a most effrontful air, and a most imperious tone. Her threats are loud, and her expectations sanguine. But threats as loud have, more than once, been put to shame; and expectations as sanguine, more than once, been blasted. Seventeen centuries ago did the adversaries of the church predict her speedy downfall; but, unlike the prophets of Jehovah, they proved to be the seers of a lie: she hath lived to see their rage perish, their monuments moulder, their names sink into oblivion: and such shall be the issue of her present conflict. She can meet with no assault more furious

and formidable than those which she hath a thousand times met and a thousand times foiled. *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early.* Therefore, *no weapon that is formed against her shall prosper; and every tongue that riseth in judgment against her, she shall condemn.* The temporary success of the infidel should, indeed, confirm our faith, because it verifies the scriptures. Our Master, Christ, hath told us, that this shall be one of the signs of his approach: *when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Every infidel under heaven is, then, a witness for Christianity, and carries in his forehead the proclamation that it is divine—Let him enjoy his exultation. Under a control which he can neither elude nor resist, he is really, though ignorantly, working his own destruction, and the aggrandizement of Messiah. His progress shall be arrested, and his boast confounded, whenever he shall have performed the part allotted to him in the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.* In our patience, therefore, let us possess our souls. What, though Blasphemy display his columns in defiance to the armies of the living God? What, though Disorder spread from pole to pole, and mingle the nations in universal uproar? What, though the foundations be destroyed, their fabrics overturned, and earth quiver under the falling

wreck? That Jesus, whom we worship, sitteth king forever: he

"Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm."

With all power in heaven and earth, *he* will bring order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. In the moment of decision he will arise and plead his own cause. When he appears, in glory, to build up Zion, his enemies shall lick the very dust. The infidel, to his astonishment, will find, that in planting the seeds of unbelief, he was planting laurels for the cross: and the believer, to his unspeakable joy, that all the trials of the church, and all the tumults of the world, were but preparative to the reign of righteousness *in the ages of peace.*

4. The subject which has this evening occupied our attention, places in a strong light both the *obligation* which lies on Christians to evangelize the heathen, and their *encouragement* to attempt it.

If we count it life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, our bowels must yearn over those who are acquainted with neither. But, it would be more than unkind, and worse than reproachful, were our best sympathies to evaporate in empty words, or empty wishes. We are called not merely to

condolence, but to action. A number of the families yet under the vail are our neighbors. They border on our country; they are accessible to our enterprise. Prompt and spirited measures for introducing among them the gospel of Christ, are our bounden duty.

Our *duty*—because we *have* the means of grace, and they have *not*. The unsearchable riches of Christ have been poured in upon us, while they are languishing in spiritual poverty. They must address themselves for help to *some* more favored than themselves; and to whom with a more imperious claim than to *us*? The very difference of our situation creates us their debtors: the vicinity of our residence doubles the debt. The word and ordinances were bestowed upon us, not only that ourselves might be saved, but that we might minister to the salvation of others. Our possession, therefore, of the glorious gospel, implies, in the very nature of the privilege, an obligation to extend it as far as possible. Freely ye have received, freely ye must give. This is the way in which the gospel ever has been and ever must be diffused. Though the employment would dignify angels, God hath committed it to men. They who possess the treasure must impart it to others; and these, again, to more; till passing, *in earthen vessels*, from people to people, and from clime to clime, it enrich the world. An attempt to mo-

nopolize, or, which amounts to the same thing, a refusal to circulate it, is treason against the law of the kingdom. And let it not, my brethren, be our dishonor and our crime, to betray both ingratitude to our Redeemer, and cruelty to our fellow-men, by declining to communicate to them the mercies which, through the instrumentality of others, he hath lavished upon us.

With the superiority of our privileges, the genius of our profession conspires to challenge our interference in behalf of the heathen. As Christians, we profess that the glory of the Lord Jesus is the object most dear to our hearts, and most worthy of our pursuits. We profess to believe that the redemption of the soul is precious, and that, without the virtue of his blood, it ceaseth forever. Is this a *sincere* profession? Can it at all consist with unwillingness to use every means in our power for diffusing, far and near, the sweet savor of his name? Must not a guilty blush crimson our faces, if we presume to pray *thy kingdom come*, when we are conscious that we have *done* nothing, are *doing* nothing, *endeavor* to do nothing, for the promotion of his kingdom? Do we, in very deed, believe, that there is no salvation in any other; no name given under heaven whereby sinners can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ, and yet look coolly on, while multitudes of the heathen are perishing within our

reach, nor ever stretch out a hand for their relief? Yes, my brethren, a generous and persevering attempt to proclaim among them the glad tidings of a SAVIOR, is a tribute to the *decency* of our Christian profession; and it is a tribute which their most afflicting necessities forbid to be deferred any longer.

If you heard of a number of human beings shut out from every sustenance, and falling, in rapid succession, the victims of famine, and knew, at the same time, that vigorous exertion might rescue the survivors, what anxiety would thrill every heart, what eagerness animate every countenance! How would the hand pour forth its spontaneous benefactions! How speedily would messengers be dispatched with the staff of life! Alas! my brethren, we speak to you of a more terrible famine; *a famine not of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing of the word of the Lord.* We plead with you not for expiring bodies; it is the spirit, the spirit that dies! To the heart of the Christian be our appeal. Suppose thy bible taken from thee; thy sabbaths blotted from thy days; the mercies of the sanctuary fled; thy father's fellowship denied; thy hopes, *full of immortality*, vanished; the shadows of eternal night stretching over thy soul—And if the thought be more intolerable than ten thousand deaths, think of yonder pagans, without God, and without

hope. Ah! while the sentence is on my lips, they are passing, by hundreds, into that world unseen, with no renewing spirit, and no atoning blood! *O that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears*, that I might weep unceasingly over the mighty ruin!

If any additional argument can be needed to render the proof of our duty, on this point, completely triumphant, that argument is supplied by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. When he left this world, and went unto the Father, his parting injunction to his followers was, *Go ye and teach all nations.* And that the precept is binding upon the whole church to the end of time, the promise of his presence and support most clearly evinces—*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* The command, being express and full, leaves no room for evasion. It either obligates *all*, or obligates *none.* If we may be exempted without sin, the exemption must extend to every Christian society under heaven; and then the Master's commandment would be a nullity, and his promise have neither grace nor meaning. In this matter, therefore, my brethren, we are by no means guiltless. With a single exception,* all denominations of Christians among us have violated their faith to their Lord; and

* The honor of this exception belongs to the MORAVIAN BRETHREN.

are now chargeable with habitual disrespect to his authority. Instead of hastening, with generous emulation, to the aid of the heathen, we have gone, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize: we have clamored for the shibboleths of party, and have been unanimous (ah, shameful unanimity!) in declining, on carnal and frivolous excuses, that work of faith, that labor of love. Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, consider your ways. If we persist in neglecting these heathen, while we have the means of sending the gospel to them, they shall die in their iniquity; but their blood may be required at our hands.

Let no one object difficulties.* In a question of plain duty, a believer is not to be deterred by

* An objection to missions among the Indians, or other savages, which many view as unanswerable, is, "that some considerable progress in civilization is previously necessary to prepare a people for the reception of Christianity. You must first make them men, say the patrons of this opinion, before you make them Christians. You must teach them to live in fixed habitations, to associate in villages, to cultivate the soil, and then you may hope that they will hear and understand when you unfold the sublime principles of the gospel."*

Plausible and popular as this objection is, it is equally unsupported by reason, by scripture, or by fact.

If the gospel cannot succeed among the Indians, for example, the obstacle must be either in their understandings or in their manner of life.

The former opinion "supposes a wider difference between the understanding of the man of the woods and the man of the city,

* *Dr. Hardy's (of Edinburgh) Sermon before the Society, in Scotland, for propagating Religious Knowledge, p.* 14.

difficulties. Thus saith the Lord, is his warrant: and as long as there is nothing too hard

than what does, in fact, take place. The human mind is not, in any country, below the reach of discipline and religious instruction. The American Indian, the Pacific islander, and the African negro, are shrewd men, whose intellectual capacity will not suffer in comparison with the uneducated classes of people on the continent of Europe."* Why should it, since it is culture, and that alone, which destroys the level of abilities naturally equal? Surely the Indian, whose necessities compel him not only to hunt and fish for his subsistence, but to be, in a great measure, his own artificer, as well as the guardian of his private and public right, must be superior, in point of general understanding, to those vast bodies of Europeans whose intelligence the division of labor has confined to a detached article of manufacture, or to the merely servile operations of agriculture. Indeed, all the national transactions with the Indians show them to possess great acuteness, and no small share of what learning cannot bestow—common sense. How seldom will you find, I do not say among the vulgar, but among the polished orders of society, better specimens of well formed idea, and of genuine eloquence, than are frequent in the Indian talks?

If, on the other hand, their manner of life be considered as presenting the decisive obstacle, this opinion supposes it much more difficult to alter outward habits than inward principles. Christians will not dispute that the gospel can and does transform both the heart and the character; yet it is thought unable to overcome a propension to wandering from place to place. The plain meaning of the objection, therefore, is this, that some means *more powerful than the gospel*, must be applied to civilize the Indians, and prepare them for its reception. For if it be admitted, that the gospel can civilize as well as save, the objection falls at once to the ground. But if its power to civilize be denied, while its power to save is admitted, it becomes the objectors to show the reason of this distinction, and also what those more effectual means of civilization are. Be they what they may, since the gospel is excluded, they must be merely human; and then the principle of the objection turns out to be this, that the wisdom of man is better adapted to civilize the Indians, than the wisdom of God.

Further: the objection supposes that savages are to be civilized without *any* religious aid. For whatever arguments prove the uti-

* *Ib. p.* 15.

for Omnipotence, there is nothing to justify disobedience or demur. Unbelief looks at opposi-

lity, in this matter, of religion at all, conclude, with tenfold energy, in favor of the religion of Christ. But to neglect the religious principle, would be to neglect the most potent auxiliary which can be employed in managing human nature; and to act in the spirit of that wise philosophy which would erect civil society upon the basis of atheism.

It would swell this note into a dissertation, to state the various considerations which militate against the idea of civilizing the Indians before we attempt to christianize them. But granting this, for a moment, to be necessary, who shall effect it? Philosophers? Merchants? Politicians? If we wait for them, the sun will expend his last light, and the business be unfinished. The Indians have had intercourse with the whites, in the concerns of trade and policy, nearly two hundred years, and most of them are as wild as ever. To put off evangelical missions to them, till, in the ordinary course of things, they become civilized, is, therefore, equivalent to putting them off forever.

2. If the opinion that the gospel can succeed only among civilized people, receives little countenance from reason, it receives less from scripture.

No such restriction of its influence is contemplated in prophecy. Its universal reception is the subject of numberless predictions; but they contain not a hint that the want of civilization shall be such a bar to its progress as is commonly imagined. On the contrary, it is expressly declared, that the most roving and untutored tribes shall rejoice in Messiah's salvation, even while they retain their unpolished characters and manners. *Sing unto the* LORD *a new song—Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages* that Kedar doth inhabit—Let the inhabitants of the rock sing; let them shout from the top of the mountains.* Beyond all controversy, the general sense of the prophet, in the words of that elegant scholar, Bishop LOWTH, is, that "the most uncultivated countries, and the most rude and uncivilized people, shall confess and celebrate, with thanksgiving, the blessing of the knowledge of God graciously imparted to them."† And he particularizes, as an example, those wild Arabs, who, in every point of comparison, were as inaccessible to the gospel as the American Indians.

* *Or tents.*

† *Translation of Isaiah. Notes, p.* 198, *4to.*

tion, and faints. Faith looks at the promise of God, and conquers. In the strength of the pro-

No such restriction was thought of by the apostle Paul. He was a debtor not more to the Greeks than to the barbarians. He maintains, that in the body of Christ *there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free.* A position which evidently assumes, that barbarians or Scythians might be Christians no less than Jews or Greeks, bondmen or free.

No such restriction is to be found in the commission which the Lord Jesus hath left his church. Thus it runs, *Go and teach* ALL NATIONS—*Go ye into* ALL THE WORLD, *and preach the gospel to* EVERY CREATURE, manifestly, every human creature, for such only are objects of the gospel-salvation. Not a syllable about civilization. And unless it can be proved, that Indians, and other savages, are neither nations nor human creatures, or, if they are, that they are in no part of the world, the prejudice we are combating must be abandoned as in direct opposition to the will and the commandment of Christ.

Such a restriction, moreover, effaces the chief character and glory of the gospel, viz. that *it is the* POWER OF GOD *to salvation.* Were it what many take it to be, a system of mere moral suasion, of cool, philosophic argument, the case would be different, and the prejudice just. Indians and Hottentots are, indeed, rather rough materials for a religion cantly styled *rational.* But whoever knows any thing of *real* Christianity, knows that the conversion of a sinner is the exclusive work of JEHOVAH the SPIRIT. It is this principle, and this alone, which makes the preaching of the word to men *dead in trespasses and sins*, a *reasonable* service. Now, to say that the gospel *cannot* succeed among a people not previously civilized, is to say, either that it is *not* the power of God, or that there are some things too hard for Omnipotence.

3. This opinion, dissonant from reason and scripture, is also contrary to fact.

Was the world universally civilized when Christianity was promulged? or did it prosper only in civilized countries? What were the ancient Getulæ, in Africa? the Sarmatians and Scythians, in Europe? If we can credit history, they were as remote from civilization as the American Indians. Yet among these, and other nations equally uncultivated and savage, had the gospel, in the time of Tertullian, established its reign.* And in Britain it penetrated into

* *Tertull. adversus Judæos, cap.* vii.

mise, worm Jacob thrashes the mountains, and beats them small as chaff. It is the way of the Holy One of Israel to order his servants on difficult duty, without showing them immediately how they are to succeed. Reserving to himself the manner and the praise of their victory, he lays upon them a necessity of trusting his faithfulness; and they never did and never shall trust it in vain.

But why do I speak of difficulties? The most formidable ones which must be encountered in a mission to the heathen, have been overcome, and

those places which Roman arts and arms had never been able to reach.*

This general assertion might be amplified in an interesting detail, and might receive additional force from the sanctions of modern history. But either would protract, to an immodcrate length, a note already too long. We may, however, ask, why the gospel should be unequal to the effects which it formerly produced, and of which its friends made their just and unanswerable boast? Let us fairly risk the experiment, whether the cross of Christ has lost its influence on barbarian minds. Instead of waiting till civilization fit our Indian neighbors for the gospel, let us try whether the gospel will not be the most successful means of civilizing them. The grace of the Lord Jesus will do what philosophy and the arts will never do—tame the wild heart: and there is no doubt of a corresponding alteration in the conduct. One Christian institution alone, the holy sabbath, will go farther to civilize them in a year, than all human expedients in a century. Driven continually before an extending frontier; their manners debauched by the commerce of unprincipled whites; their numbers diminishing by war and by vice; the only alternative which seems to be offered them is, conversion or extermination.

* *Inaccessa Romanis loca. Id. ib.* A number of testimonies to the same facts are collected in that learned work of *Grotius, De veritate Religionis Christianæ.*

are daily overcome, by the firmness and intrepidity of carnal men. *They* can visit the savage tribes, can cross their rivers, climb their mountains, traverse their forests; can learn their language, conform to their manners, acquire their confidence; can patiently submit to hunger and cold, fatigue and peril:—For what? To decorate earthly science, or to collect the dust of lucre or the vapors of fame. They pretend to no divine command; they think of no divine support. Yet we, who talk familiarly of both, turn pale at the mention of those obstacles which they continually surmount. Whence this resoluteness on the one side, and this timidity on the other! The uncourtly truth is, that the men of the world are *in earnest*, and we are *not*. And what must they, what can they, conclude from our supineness? Either that our religion is false, or that we do not believe it. How long ere this reproach be wiped away? Duty urges, misery implores, thousands of precious souls are the depending stake, and not a moment is to be lost. In the work before us, in the immortal work of evangelizing the heathen, let us rouse each latent energy, and brave opposition like good soldiers of Jesus Christ. And certainly the encouragement is as great as the call is pressing. As far as man, with the lights of prophecy, can judge, the time is not very distant, when God shall arise, and have

mercy upon Zion. What mean these dire convulsions? this crash of kingdoms? these torrents of blood? He who can here discover only the shock of human interests, or the madness of human passions, hath not penetrated beyond secondary and instrumental agencies. From the eminence of scriptural prediction, a humble believer overlooks the mole-hill of worldly politics, and descries the moving power, and the necessary effect, of the machinery of Providence. To him it is evident that Jehovah *shakes the nations*, and is shaking them, that *the desire of all nations may come*. And hence his faith derives an establishment, and his hope an elevation, which earth is as unable to destroy as to create. Impending calamity, then, should stimulate, and not dishearten, the disciples of Jesus. The walls of Jerusalem are commonly built in troublous times. Nor hath the career of the gospel been ever more ample and brilliant, than in the days which were memorable for *distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and looking after those things which were coming upon the earth.* In these circumstances of disaster and dismay, the people of God are charged to look up, and lift up their heads, because their redemption draweth nigh, and the Son of man is coming with great power and glory. If these are, in any degree,

the signs of the times, then *now* is the time for the armies of Israel to gird every man his sword on his thigh, and follow David, his king, to conquest and glory.

If from the sphere of politics we turn to that of religion, we shall behold events which ought to convert every doubt into proof, and every wish into a vow. While the spirit of discord rages in the world, the spirit of union and of love descends upon the church. Beyond the waters of the Atlantic, our brethren in the faith and patience of Jesus rejoice in his most benignant influences. Astonishing spectacle! The spell of party is broken, the antipathies of the cradle expire, the strife of ages ceases, and a sweeter harmony of heart and of measures, among Christians of different name, is produced in an hour, than has been granted to the intreaties, the labors, the prayers, of the best of men, for centuries together!

Do you demand the cause of this gracious unanimity? It is the doing of the Lord. Its object? It is the extension of the Mediator's kingdom. Its fruits? They are, already, embassies of peace to the heathen. Great is the company who have gone forth, with primitive zeal, to publish the word of life. The probability is that Christ crucified, that Christ whom our souls love, is, at this moment, preached to the barbarians of the southern seas; and that an evangelical mission

is on its way to the interior of Africa! Ye servants of the most high God, who show unto the Gentiles the way of salvation, all hail! May the Breaker go up before you; even Jehovah on the head of you; may he cheer you with his presence, fill you with his Spirit, clothe you with his blessing! And what more auspicious omen can we, my brethren, desire? When the work is actually begun, when it has received the most unequivocal tokens of divine approbation, shallwe still linger, and tempt the Lord by asking any further signs? To him who is not blind, the finger of his providence points; to him who is not deaf, the voice of his providence calls. Incitement of a more imperious kind would encroach on the province of miracle.

If to these encouragements we add the promise of our Master in heaven, reluctance will be cut off from her last retreat. He hath said, that he will be with his people in their attempts to teach the nations. If, on a design so truly Christian, we go in *his* name, and in *his* strength, we have a *right* to expect his aid; nor is it possible that he should abandon us, or put us to shame. He hath bound himself, by the oath of his covenant, to beat down opposition before those who, obedient to his authority, constrained by his love, and confiding in his truth, enter upon arduous duty; and the glory of his crown is staked on the

issue. With the Lord of hosts on our side, whom or what shall we fear? To him all difficulties are alike. At his command the treasures of the earthling shall flow in the service of the cross; and hundreds shall arise to solicit, as an enviable distinction, the office of a gospel-herald to the savages. Clad in the armor of the sanctuary, and conducted by the *Captain of salvation*, they shall go forth *conquering and to conquer*. Ere his promise fail, the mountains shall sink, the valleys rise, the rivers be driven back to their sources, and ocean again divide his waters. Who, then, are on the Lord's side? Who prefer the salvation of men above their chiefest joy? Who burn to hide the dishonor of the past in the glory of the future, and aspire to the dignity of being fellow-workers with God? Let them, with one heart and one soul, in the faith of the gospel, in the good will of brethren, in the bowels of Jesus Christ, forthwith pledge themselves to each other, to those apostolical believers beyond the sea, to the heathen who are perishing for lack of vision, that they will unite their efforts to fill the dark places of the land with the light of God's salvation. Should we succeed in the conversion of a single pagan, the acquisition would infinitely repay our expenditure and our toil. For our Lord himself hath pronounced the whole world, in comparison with *one soul*, to be a thing of nought.

But O, my brethren, who shall count the number, or define the extent, or limit the duration, of those blessings which *our* exertions may be instrumental in imparting to the heathen! Who shall stop the river of life in its course through their parched soil! Most transporting thought! that thousands of believers whom we shall never see in the flesh, and tens of thousands who shall come into being when we are gathered unto our fathers, may trace their knowledge of the Savior to the execution of that plan in virtue of which I address you this evening! and that its magnificent result may never be fully disclosed, till the mystery of Providence be finished, the election of grace brought in, and the shout of final redemption thunder through the temple of God!

PARDON OF SIN IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN PHILADELPHIA,

ON THE

Evening of sabbath the 31st of May, 1801.

SERMON V.

PARDON OF SIN, &c.

EPHES. I. 7

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

WHOEVER believe that they have sinned, and that God is just, cannot be indifferent to their condition and their prospects. The perfect development of his righteousness being reserved for a future state, and every question concerning it involving an immortal spirit and an eternal destiny, it would be madness not to inquire what shall be our fate. Reason and conscience pronounce, with revelation, that *the wages of sin is death*. And neither reason nor conscience, neither the works nor the providence of God, can discover the means or warrant the hope of es-

cape. Dost thou doubt? Make fairly the experiment. Retire into thine own bosom, and ask, can God justify the ungodly? Thy reason, abashed, declines to answer, while the voice of conscience pours accusations into thine ears, and her finger points to *the wrath to come*. Flee from thyself and thy fellow-sinners, whose reason is as dark and whose conscience is as guilty as thy own. Explore the works of the Creator. Thou wilt see order, bounty, magnificence, but not a trace of pardon. Go down, now, to the abode of those rebel-spirits *who kept not their first estate*. Ah! here are only *chains of darkness, and vials of wrath*. Hasten hence, and consult the angels who surround the throne. Ask them if thou mayest hope for more lenity than the apostates of their own family? Ask them if the HOLY ONE can save thee without prejudice to his glory? The heavenly hosts cannot solve the problem. Silence seals up their lips of love; and thou, thy soul unsatisfied, thy doubts redoubled, must return and pass the time of thy sojourning, alternately shivering with the ague, and burning with the fever, of despair.

On this darkness, which the lights of the creature serve only to deepen, God hath caused the light of his gospel to descend. It hath driven away those forms of horror which stalk around us in reason's and in nature's gloom, and reveal-

ed his angel of peace, the WORD made flesh. He calls us this day into his sanctuary, not to face his terrors, and to perish at his rebuke, but to embrace his overtures of mercy, and to rejoice in his salvation.

This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that, to secure an honorable exercise of mercy, God *spared not his own Son, but delivered him up* to the death, that he might *purge away our transgressions.* And we are commanded to announce to you these glad tidings of great joy, that *in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.* Astonishing words! More astonishing truths! *Forgiveness of sins*—forgiveness *through the redemption of the* SAVIOR'S *blood*—forgiveness *according to the riches of his grace.* These are the sublime subjects of the text; and you see, in their order, the plan of discourse.

Spirit of grace and truth! impart thine influence, that we may speak of them and hear, as belongeth to those who speak and who hear the oracles of God!

I. I am to explain that *forgiveness of sins* which is declared in the text.

To form a correct judgment on this point, we must ponder the condition into which sin has brought us. In his moral government God has

inseparably connected sin with punishment. Exclusion from his favor, his communion, his presence: his abhorrence in this world, and the damnation of hell in the next, are its native consequences and its just reward. It is this obligation to punishment which we term *guilt*. The divine law ties down the person of the sinner to the penalty of his sin. Forgiveness looses the wrathful bond. It dissolves the connection, not between sin and suffering, which is as immutable as the holiness and truth of God, but between sin and the destruction of the sinner. His crimes are consigned to oblivion; and the Lord, instead of entering into judgment with him, acquits him from every charge, pronounces him innocent, and crowns him with blessing. Forgiveness, then, produces a double effect.

1. It removes the curse which, till that moment, abides on the sinner's person.

Justice had issued her sentence; the law had arrested him, and bound him for execution. Forgiveness steps in, takes the death-warrant out of the hand of the law, breaks the seal and cancels the authority of that fatal instrument, strikes off the fetters of the condemned wretch, and bids him go forth.

2. Forgiveness confers the favor and fellowship of God, and the inheritance of his heavenly kingdom.

Pardon is the great preliminary to advancement. The Lord forgives, that he may bless. A pardoned rebel passes into the family of God's dear children. Accepted in the Beloved, the Spirit of adoption descends upon his heart, and his countenance brightens with the smile of reconciliation. Compassed about with favor as with a shield, he walks in safety and in peace. No weapon that is formed against him shall prosper. The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Though his transgression may be visited with the rod, and his iniquity with stripes, yet, *my loving kindness*, saith God, *will I not take from him; nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.* And while the Lord is thus his shelter and his shade, his glory and the lifter up of his head, manifesting covenant-mercy in giving that which is good, he is admitted to the divine fellowship. An open door into the holiest is set before him, through which he is commanded and qualified to draw nigh and commune with the living God. Without reluctance, without misgivings, with all holy boldness, it is his duty to *go unto God his exceeding joy.* The privilege is most congenial with the principles of the new man. A pacified conscience and a cleansed heart find their element in the presence and enjoyment of God. *O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth*

for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

This state of friendship with God is the pledge of his eternal kingdom. *We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* Whom he translates into his family, he appoints to his rest: pardons and adopts them, that they may be forever in the highest heavens, *to the praise of the glory of his grace.* Between sonship and the kingdom, his covenant has fixed an indissoluble connection. *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory.*

These are indeed glad tidings. Every syllable is accented with transport. "But oh!" cries the desponding spirit, "mock me not with a fallacious hope. I sink under my guilt: I perish, behold, I perish!"

Nay, I preach not to you an idle tale. This gospel of forgiveness is faithful and worthy of all acceptation. It is the joint message of mercy and judgment through the lips of truth. The principle on which forgiveness is tendered hushes every tumult, and relieves every doubt. That dread enigma, *how God can be just and justify the un-*

godly, is unfolded in the text. All forgiveness of sin flows through the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the

II. Part of the discourse. *We have redemption through his blood.*

Here occurs a double inquiry. The one involving the *doctrine* of redemption; the other, the *nature of our interest in it.*

1. The *doctrine* of redemption, as taught by the apostle, may be reduced to the following propositions:

First. That sin cannot go unpunished: and, therefore, that a forgiveness which implies its impunity is impossible.

Second. That it is altogether consistent with the divine righteousness to inflict the punishment of sin upon a competent *surety*, and to pardon sinners in virtue of his atonement.

Third. That no obedience or suffering of any mere creature can atone for sin.

Fourth. That the redemption of the blood of Jesus, as it is the only, so it is the all-sufficient reason of the pardon of sin. May the Spirit of Jesus help us to understand and improve these truths!

First. Sin cannot go unpunished: and, therefore, a forgiveness which implies its impunity is impossible.

The impunity of sin is incompatible with the nature, the government, and the covenant of God.

His *nature* forbids it. An eternal contradiction to his perfection, *it shall not dwell in his presence*, but must be marked as *that abominable thing which he hateth.* And if his very being is set against it, this, in itself, is the most terrible punishment. All other plagues are lost in the abyss of that curse, God is thine enemy. Yes, brethren, his holiness is *a consuming fire, which burns up his enemies round about;* and, therefore, it forbids the impunity of sin.

His *government* also forbids it. A great God, and a great king, whose glory is the end, and whose will is the law, of creation; he *must* be obeyed, and on him must be the visible dependence of the universe. Sin is the attempt of a creature to throw off his dependence. And could he sin with impunity, his independence would be effected. But an independent creature is an atheistical absurdity. The punishment of sin, therefore, results necessarily from the divine *supremacy.*

It equally results from the divine *rectitude.* God *sitteth on a throne judging right.* But a righteous governor who does not punish crime is a contradiction. It is in giving every one his due, or, in other words, in apportionate condition to character, that righteousness consists. And the

perfection of this apportionment is the perfection of righteousness. If, then, God should permit any sin to escape, his righteousness would be imperfect; if every sin, he would have none at all; nor could the idea of righteousness exist in the universe. Sin, therefore, is punished, because its punishment is intrinsically just, and cannot be remitted by a just God. Otherwise it would either never be inflicted, or be resolved into a question of mere expediency: and this would annihilate the distinction between right and wrong, and with it every moral attribute of Deity.

Moreover, the protection which the justice of God owes to his innocent creatures, as well as to the honor of his own holiness, requires the coercion of transgressors. That a principle of ingratitude, rebellion, and enmity against him—a principle which defies his wrath, and threatens his throne; which hurls desolation and wretchedness through his world—should go uncontrolled, or unchastised, is a thought infinitely shocking. Scripture coincides with these views and this reasoning. The *wrath of God revealed from heaven against the unrighteousness of men*, it calls his *judgments*. As a judge *with whom there is no iniquity*, he will determine their final state, by recompensing to some eternal rest, and to others eternal tribulation. If he *rain upon sinners*

snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, it is because he is *the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness.*

To the consideration of God's general government we must add that of his *covenant with man.*

The law of morals prescribed to our race is armed with penalty, not only in the nature of things, but by the express declaration of the lawgiver. Coupled, moreover, with a federal transaction, which embraces, on the one hand, the threatening of death, and, on the other, the sweet promise of life, it binds to the fulfillment of their respective stipulations the fidelity both of God and man. But the law is violated: the covenant is broken: the forfeiture is incurred; and fallen man is under a dispensation of wrath flowing from the breach of the covenant of works. His sin is, therefore, under a double obligation to punishment: the one arising from the holiness and rectoral justice of God; the other from that covenant-threatening to which he consented, and which the divine veracity is pledged to execute. Accordingly, the Law of God knows nothing of forgiveness. Encircled with terrible glory, she takes her position on Ebal, and with her trumpet, which is *as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh,* issues her proclamation, *The wages of sin is* DEATH! CURSED *is every one that*

continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them!

It appears, then, that the perdition of a sinner is inevitable, unless some expedient can be devised which may conciliate his pardon with the holiness, the government, and the truth of God. Blessed be his name! such an expedient is possible. For,

My *second* proposition is, that it is altogether consistent with the divine righteousness to inflict the punishment of sin upon a competent surety, and to pardon sinners in virtue of his atonement.

By *atonement*, taken in a large sense, is understood such an obedience as shall fulfill the precept, and such suffering as shall exhaust the penalty, of the divine law; and thus, by satisfying the claims of justice, remove every obstruction to the exercise of mercy.

Atonement proceeds on the principle of *substitution*. The guilt of men being transferred to an able, a voluntary, and an accepted surety, their responsibility attaches to him, and they are released. So that, by an intervention of an atonement, the righteousness of God may be displayed in the punishment, and his grace in the pardon of sin. Nor is the propriety of such a dispensation liable to just exception. On the contrary, it is susceptible of the clearest proof. For them who, without murmuring or disputing, receive the tes-

timony of God, it is sufficient that his word declares the fact. The Lord Jesus, *his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* Jehovah *hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all;* yea, *hath made* HIM *to be* SIN *for us, who knew no sin; that* WE *might be made the* RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD *in him.*

But in forming our judgment on this point, the nature of justice, and the works and providence of God, come to our aid.

1st. Justice requires that the law be maintained, and, therefore, that violations of it be punished. And, provided this end be gained, that is, provided *every transgression and disobedience receive a just recompense of reward,* justice has no farther demand. The reason why, in all ordinary cases, her stroke lights on the person of the offender, is, that, in all such cases, she has no other way of punishing his offense. It is plain that her quarrel is with sin, and with the sinner solely on account of his sin; but now, on the supposition that his *guilt* can be separated from his *person,* so as not to elude the sentence of the law, it is equally plain that her quarrel with him ceases. For the sin which was the cause of it, and to punish which she had arrested him, is, notwithstanding his liberation, in her hands, to be punished to the uttermost. This is the effect of suretiship. The same homage is yielded; the

same rights asserted, the same testimony against sin exhibited, the same vengeance executed, in the obedience and suffering of a surety as in the obedience and suffering of the principal. Expiation of sin by a surety is, therefore, most agreeable to the nature of justice.

2d. That part of the divine *works* with which we are most conversant, our own nature, gives strong confirmation to this doctrine. The principle of substitution, of the discharge of obligation by a surety, is interwoven with the texture of the human mind, and with all the operations of human society. Even those who are most hostile to it, when it appears in the form of imputed sin and imputed righteousness, are constantly and necessarily governed by it. The wisdom and integrity of their agent redound to their advantage, and they must reap the fruits of his folly and his faults. In short, it is the life-spring of intercourse among men; nor could the affairs of the world be carried on one moment without it. Trace up, then, to its source, and pursue through its results, the *principle* of the substitution of Christ Jesus in the room of his people; and when you find, as upon sober inquiry you will, that it coincides with an essential character of man's moral constitution, you will no longer contemn it as unreasonable, or revile it as unjust.

3d. Upon this dispensation, which is founded in the nature of justice, and has a counterpart in our own frame, the *providence* of God furnishes an ample comment.

He has always dealt with men through the medium of representation. The fall of our first parent, who, as our surety, transgressed the covenant of his God, *brought death into the world and all our woe. In Adam all die:* for *in him all have sinned.* In his covenant with Israel, God urged the blessing or the curse which he should bring on their posterity, as motives to deter them from sin, and secure their obedience. He has revealed himself as *a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments.* In holy baptism parents are the sureties of their infant children. The baptismal vow, (let the truth, O young people, sink down into your hearts!) the baptismal vow is binding upon them, and if they despise it in riper years, especially if they die unbelievers in that Savior to whom they were dedicated, God will plead with their souls for the profanation of that *blood of the covenant* of which the symbol has been sprinkled upon them. In the present crisis of human things, the vials of his wrath are poured out upon the posterity of those who be-

trayed his truth, and slew his servants. He gives them blood to drink for the blood of his saints which was shed by their ancestors. Nay, while the sentence is on my lips, thousands of Adam's children, incapable of action, are writhing in agony and sinking in death, the victims of his curse, though not, by any personal agency, the partakers of his crime. The world, then, is full of the imputation of sin. And why shall it not as well be imputed *to* a representative for expiation, as *from* a representative for punishment?

From this strong ground we are not to be driven by the plea, that righteousness and sin, being moral and personal qualities and acts, cannot be transferred to a surety. We know it. Neither do the scriptures teach, nor we maintain, any such transfer. Instead of establishing, it would destroy, our doctrine.* We admit that personal

* For if my personal sin could be taken from me, and made the personal sin of another, he must then suffer for himself, and not for me, as I would be personally innocent. He would not be under the imputation of my sin, because I would have none to impute; and I could not enjoy the benefit of his righteousness; because, on the one hand, I would require none; and, on the other, he, as suffering for himself, would have none to offer. So that here would be no representation, neither the substance nor the shadow of a vicarious atonement. Therefore, while my personal demerit must for ever remain my own, the consequences of it are borne by my glorious surety. It is this which renders the imputation of sin to the Lord Jesus, a doctrine so acceptable to the conscience, and so consoling to the heart, of a convinced sinner. And this simple distinction between a transfer of personal acts to a substitute, and the transfer of their legal connection, which is properly imputation, relieves the

acts cannot be *transferred*, but affirm that they are *imputed*. Imputation lies in transferring to a surety, not the qualities and acts themselves, but their *legal connection*. It is a transfer of *obligation* and of *right*. The moral principle of this transfer, or, in other words, of the imputation of sin to a surety, enters into every case of representation, whatever be its objects or modifications. And the question, How can sin be expiated by a surety? which stumbles all *the disputers of this world*, has the same embarrassments, and the same solution as the question, How can the deed of my *representative* be sustained in law and equity as *my own?* It is for these disputers to show why I may not as well *suffer* as *act*, by representation? Our astonishment in every other instance but that of the kinsman-Redeemer, would be, not that the principle of imputation should be admitted, but that it should be doubted. As it continually recurs, we lose its difficulty in its utility, and forget that it is mysterious, because it is familiar.

A vicarious atonement being thus consistent with the divine righteousness, the chief obstacle to our hope is surmounted, and the apparent contradiction between the pardon and the punish-

friends of truth from the embarrassment in which an incautious manner of speaking has sometimes involved them; and blows into the air the quibbles and cavils of its enemies.

ment of sin, vanishes. But our joy is premature. We have discovered that pardon, through an atonement, is possible; but an essential point remains to be settled. By whom shall the atonement be made? Here is a new and sad perplexity. In vain we cast our imploring look upon the creatures: not one of them has the love or the power. And this introduces my

Third proposition: which is, that no obedience or suffering of any mere creature can atone for sin.

Conscience, wounded by guilt, groping in the glimmerings of tradition, besotted with ignorance, and abused by imposture, has tried various expedients to propitiate deity. Ablutions, pilgrimages, penances, and a thousand other superstitions, abound in pagan and antichristian nations. Wealth is lavished in offerings of peace, and the body is tortured for the relief of the soul. Lying vanities all. *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Ah no! The evil lies infinitely deeper than to be reached by such remedies. That sacrifice which will be to God of a sweet-smelling savor, cannot be offered by men, nor by angels, nor by man and angel united. Not by men—for the end of an atonement is to deliver them from that very

curse which must be borne in making it. Not by angels—for this would be inconsistent with the truth of God, which denounced the curse upon the *human nature.* Not by an angel-man—because no combination of created natures can sustain the wrath, or magnify the law, or vindicate the government of God. An overwhelming difficulty, therefore, remains. Where is the sufferer to be found? Who shall yield an obedience to merit heaven for millions, or offer up for their souls the redeeming sacrifice? The mere possibility of relief without a friend to apply it, only doubles our distractions. The light which was dawning upon our darkness recedes, and leaves us to deeper horrors. But hark! it is the voice of the Deliverer! Lo, I COME. Who art thou, most gracious? I, THAT SPEAK IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, MIGHTY TO SAVE! It is the only begotten Son of God, who comes, clothed with humanity, for the salvation of perishing sinners. Whence my

Fourth proposition is, That the blood of Jesus Christ, as it is the only, so it is the all-sufficient, reason of the pardon of sin.

1st. It is, in itself, of infinite value. Whatever a sacrifice could derive from the person of the sufferer: whatever detestation of sin, or determination to punish it: whatever terror of perdition which it involves: whatever impossibility of its expiation by a creature: whatever consistency

of its pardon by a surety, could be testified by the spectacle of a humbled God; all *that* is to be found in the sacrifice of Jesus; for it is the blood of the only begotten Son. Being really man, when he endured the cross, the curse was executed upon the very nature on which it was denounced. But being unspeakably more than man, even the Father's equal, JEHOVAH IN THE FLESH, he was able to bear, at once, the whole weight of wrath, and impart to his obedience and suffering a merit and efficacy proportioned to the glory of the Godhead. The submission of the Lord Jesus to fulfill the righteousness and bear the iniquities of his people, reflected infinite lustre upon the divine government. It did what never could have been done by the eternal obedience of all sinless, and the eternal destruction of all sinful, creatures—MAGNIFY *the law, and make it* HONORABLE. Now, the evil of sin is demonstrated; the threatening of God executed; his truth preserved; his justice vindicated; his government maintained: and what should hinder the release of the wretches for whom these wonders have been wrought? What crime cannot the blood of Jesus atone? What stain can it not efface? How is it not impossible that it should not *cleanse from all sin?* Who shall set the transgressions of man in array against the righteousness of God? Here the conscience may be at

peace; for here the divine law is satisfied, and the fires of the curse extinguished. We surely need ask no more. For,

2d. Nothing more is required by the holy God. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; and hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* With sinners who are willing thus to accept forgiveness, and to choose life rather than death, he pursues his quarrel no longer, but is *in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, but forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.*

3d. What the atonement of Jesus is, in itself, and what his Father has expressly declared it to be, millions of sinners have found it to their eternal joy. All *the spirits of just men made perfect*, and all believers at this hour upon earth, have *washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* Search the records of the saved, and you will see names of the most atrocious offenders who were pardoned, and sanctified, and are now with God. Ask them how they escaped the wrath to come, and entered the everlasting rest? With one voice they will exclaim, *He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!* Ask all the family of grace who shall speedily join the celestial throng, how they ob-

tained deliverance from the curse, and access to that terrible God? With equal unanimity they will reply, *We are accepted in the Beloved!* There is, therefore, *redemption through his blood.*

Let us then proceed to our

2. Inquiry, which relates to the interest in this redemption which is implied in the text—We *have* redemption, says the apostle.

Those who enjoy the dispensation of the gospel have, *as sinners*, a common interest in the redemption of Jesus: that is, the Father has made a *grant* of him in the gospel to sinners, *as such*, for their salvation. I say, to sinners, *as such;* for the grant of the Savior is absolutely free. Unshackled with conditions, it is presented to them not as penitent, sensible, contrite, but as guilty, rebellious, vile. This grant invests them with a *right* to the Lord Jesus, whom they are to receive upon the authority of the divine warrant, with the assured faith, that, in thus receiving him, they shall be saved. Do any of you, then, demand where you are to seek forgiveness? The answer is short. You have it in the redemption of the blood of Christ. There it is offered to you. There you must apply. You shall not be sent away empty; for he hath said, *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.*

Believers, who have *fled for refuge to this hope set before them*, are in actual possession of re-

demption. Faith in the blood of Jesus, that faith which is the grace of the Holy Spirit, has made it their own. That which is common to all in the indefinite grant of the gospel, has become, by particular appropriation, their personal inheritance. Theirs it is with its whole train of blessings: theirs are the ordinances: theirs the promises: theirs the gracious covenant: life is theirs: death is theirs: eternity is theirs: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are theirs —they *shall never come into condemnation: neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heighth, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.*

While our souls rejoice in this plenteous redemption, and the forgiveness which it secures, let us lift up our eyes to the source from whence both proceed. This is the

III. And last part of my discourse. We have redemption and forgiveness *according to the riches of Jehovah's grace.*

Such is the plan of salvation, that while sinners are delivered from going down to the pit, *the Lord alone shall be exalted.* In the pardon of sin, the voice of human pretension must not be heard. *Grace, mere grace,* the *riches* of grace, is the burden of our song. The text suggests infinite arguments of this truth.

1. Sin is such an evil, that nothing but the *grace of God* could have projected its pardon. Sin! Ah! my brethren, who can develop the meaning of the horror-smiting term? Canst thou dive into its depths, and display its hidden hells? *One* sin changed legions of holy spirits into devils. *One* sin brought perdition on our wretched race. Make thy suit to the benevolence of angels; lay before them, in its true colors, the least of thy provocations, and thy best hope will be *as the giving up of the ghost*. Not one of them would dream of mercy for thee. It belongs not to creatures to show *such* forgiveness. Herein he is glorious, herein he is seen to be God, that when he alone has a full view of the sinfulness of sin, he alone can think of its pardon.

2. As nothing less than divine grace could forgive sin, so the purpose of it *originated* in no exterior cause. Many, whose affections are touched with the love of Christ, entertain forbidding thoughts of the austerity of the Father. This is a great error. Christ purchased not the Father's love. On the contrary, it was the Father's love which appointed and sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Grace is its own reason. *He loved us, because he loved us.* Here is the original fountain, here the overflowing ocean, from which forgiveness issues. Had it depended upon

any thing external, no Redeemer had been known, no hope revealed, no sinner saved.

3. The most *ineffable effect* of the Father's grace, its *riches*, its *infinite expression*, is the forgiveness of sin at the expense of the blood of Jesus. Had he given the universe beside, it would have been little, it would have been nothing, in comparison of his Son. With all holy reverence be it spoken, grace can go no farther. Sinners, here is the very heart of God! Here he has uncovered the profound of his compassions. God so *loved the world, that he gave his* ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON—for whom? for rebels; for those who were *enemies to him by wicked works.* For what? *That whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but might have everlasting life.*

4. In the *application* of forgiveness through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, *grace is exceedingly abundant.*

Not only is it beyond our desert and expectation, but far above all that we are able so much as to think. The forgiveness which the gospel reveals, is the forgiveness of God. We can form no conception of the generosity, the extent, the riches of forgiveness, unless we consider the wonderful redemption through which it flows. Grace went every length in giving the Lord Jesus for an atoning sacrifice; and it goes every length in pardoning them that believe in his name.

The doctrine which I have now laid before you, brethren, is not a lofty speculation which you may admire without adopting: It is truth of everlasting moment; truth essential to your happiness; and for which you shall soon, very soon, give an account at the bar of God. I address you as sinners who need forgiveness; who perish without it; and shall never obtain it but through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In his great name, therefore, allow me to demand what reception you will give to the gospel of his cross. *Exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel,* and *forgiveness of sins, he waiteth to be gracious;* and tenders to the chief of sinners, without money and without price, all the benefits of his covenant. *Behold,* they are his own blessed words, *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If* ANY MAN *hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.* Let no sinner, then, exclude himself from mercy which is offered in the gospel, as directly to him, as if there were not another sinner under heaven: and offered with such marvelous grace, that nothing but his *acceptance* is wanting to place him forever beyond the reach of the curse. The corrupt heart will invent a thousand pretexts to palliate its neglect of the great salvation, and has even the effrontery to charge its sin upon the holy God. But be it known unto you, that if, after all

your means and opportunities of grace, you die in your iniquity, you will be found, at last, to have been your own destroyers; and the real, the guilty cause of your rejecting Christ Jesus, to have been your own VOLUNTARY, CHERISHED UNBELIEF. *Ye* WILL NOT *come to him that ye might have life;* for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it!

Some who have been religiously educated, and who add to a general profession of Christianity all the exterior decencies of life; who are sober, just, humane; active in their temporal vocations; at peace with themselves, and respected by others; may consider as inapplicable to them, remonstrances which imply an impious character and a dangerous state. Supposing their religion to be sufficiently correct, they give to the wind all their anxieties about their present pardon or their future condition: while, at the same time, they are strangers to the power of godliness, nor ever understood the meaning, by enjoying the mercy, of *passing from death unto life.* Be not deceived. The salvation of God is not so slight a matter, nor so slightly to be possessed. The Christian name, the charitable opinion of men, the outward privileges of God's people, embellished with the whole train of social morals, fall far short of that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* All this will not prove forgiveness of sin, nor the

sanctification of the Holy Ghost. To a hope which shall not become the mock of death, more, my brethren, much more is necessary. You must be divinely convinced of your natural enmity against God. This enmity must be slain, and you reconciled to him by the death of his Son. You must receive, as condemned rebels, a pardon written in his atoning blood. You must be renewed by his Spirit, and conformed to his image; be united with him by that faith which purifies the heart and works by love; be communicants in his death and the power of his resurrection; and become, in virtue of this union and communion, fruitful branches of the true vine, or—*ye have no life in you.*

In some who congratulate themselves on their escape from the bondage of superstition, and who remit religious care to minds incapable of liberal research, this doctrine of forgiveness may, perhaps, excite only a smile of scorn. Yet with all their contempt for what they call vulgar prejudice, and all their superiority to religious belief, they must allow me one moment to expostulate. *We* rejoice in the salvation of Christ Jesus: it is our greatest happiness that *we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.* *You* affect to pity and despise us, while you reject our Redeemer's cross, and *put him to an open shame.* To justify

this violence, your own hope ought to be better founded and more animating than ours. Is this the fact? Are you *sure* that you have committed no offense which, without forgiveness, must ruin you forever? Are you *sure* that there is forgiveness with God in any other manner than through the redemption of the Savior's blood? or that the gospel which reveals it may not prove true at last? Are you *sure* that your own sins are pardoned? or that you run no hazard of any judgment to come? Can you produce a single instance of pardoned sin except through the obedience and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ? On what, then, do you presume? I shut up this volume of inspiration, and challenge your hope. What is its nature? and where is its warrant? Is it in these heavens? Is it in that deep? Is it inscribed on any page of creation's book, or engraven on the tablets of conscience? Unbeliever! give glory to God, and homage to his truth. Thou knowest that on all these points, on all that awaits thee beyond the grave, thou art tossed from conjecture to conjecture, and thy most flattering expectation is, at best, but dread uncertainty. Upon such slender ground, in the love and indulgence of a thousand lusts, thou art about to take the adventurous leap into a world of everlasting retribution! And, with all this, thou art a man of reason, a philosopher, who ne-

ver believes but on evidence, nor acts but from conviction, and looks down with disdain upon the Christian faith! God have mercy on thee, poor fanatic! Yet thou canst not altogether stifle thy secret misgivings. There are times when, like Felix, thou tremblest! Guilt, with all thy boastings, makes thee a coward. Nor wilt thou ever find relief but in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Be persuaded to try this happiest of all experiments. He is rich in mercy, and ready to forgive even thee. A refusal will cost thee thy soul; and thou wilt perish under that most fearful condemnation which will follow the rejection of eternal life, when it was near, *even at the door*.

Here, then, we part, and I turn to a voice of anguish which pierces my ear. Who is this that standeth afar off, with his eyes downcast to earth, smiting his breast, and crying, in broken accents, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* What aileth thee? Have the terrors of the Almighty seized upon thy spirit? Are thy sins set in order before thee? And while thou art compelled to sue for pardon, art thou filled with apprehensions lest thy suit be refused? Come to a forgiving God in the name of Jesus, and dismiss thy fears. Let no enormity of transgression be an obstacle to an *immediate* acceptance of *his unspeakable gift*. Sinners entertain most injurious thoughts of forgiving mercy. They measure it by their own

contractedness. Be persuaded, brethren, that Jehovah is as far above you in grace as he is in majesty. You profess to believe that there is merit enough in Jesus to save you, but doubt his *willingness* to apply it to *such* sinners. This is accursed pride, vailed in the garb of humility. "If you were not such atrocious offenders, you would more easily take courage." That is, if you had less unworthiness, or, which is the same thing, were more worthy. You wish to come with a price in your hands. You are not reconciled to a salvation of which Christ Jesus shall have all the glory. Here is the secret. Men affect to doubt *his* willingness, but *they* are not willing. Let them take eternal life as a free gift, and it is theirs. O brethren! never question the superabounding grace of God in Christ. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* This glorious forgiveness is too high to be reached by carnal or merely rational apprehension. The mind will still shrink back from it as more desirable than credible? "Is this the manner of man? Is there any resemblance to it among the creatures? How can it be true? How can it be possible?" No, it is not the manner of man; there is nothing like it among the creatures; and yet it is possible, and yet it is true.

Hear the word of Jehovah, O ye of little faith: *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will* ABUNDANTLY PARDON. "Thou hast multiplied sins upon sins," saith God, "and I will multiply pardons upon pardons." Ah! Lord God! I could not pardon, with the ten thousandth part of such goodness, my brother that is as mine own soul; and how canst *thou* pour down such pardons upon *me*? "Because thou art a man, and I am God. Let not the thankless objection again pass thy lips, nor rise in thy heart." *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* Let the doubting, disconsolate sinner throw himself, with all his guilt and vileness, into the arms of this forgiving mercy. It never yet repulsed any who came in the faith of the Mediator's blood, and it will not begin its repulses with thee. Go without delay; go with all boldness in this blood; and thou shalt find as cordial a welcome as grace can give thee.

This forgiveness of sins in the redemption of Jesus, imposes infinite obligations upon them who

have *believed it to the saving of their souls.* Whoever disparage the doctrine of sovereignty, it must not be such as owe to it all their present interest in the salvation of God, and all their hope of his eternal glory. But such are we. *By nature the children of wrath even as others; alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in us;* rushing madly on in the paths of death; grace, unsought, undesired, met us; opened our eyes to our folly; *hedged up our way with thorns;* turned us back into *the path of righteousness.* Our wounded consciences and wearied hearts found healing and rest in Jesus Christ. His precious blood was the remedy of our guilt. How soothing the voice which whispered to our troubled spirits, *Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace!* Shall we ever forget that we deserved every thing the reverse of what we have received? *That our birth and our nativity was of the land of Canaan, our father an Amorite, and our mother a Hittite? That we were cast out in the open field, to the loathing of our persons?* And that the compassionate Savior *passed by us, and saw us polluted in our own blood; and said unto us when we were in our blood,* LIVE: *yea, said unto us when we were in our blood,* LIVE! If we have fled *from the wrath to come;* if *we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;* if we

have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ABBA, *Father;* all this, and all the *glory which is yet to be revealed in us,* are the blessed fruits of forgiveness through the redemption of the blood of Jesus. Sweetly constrained by his love, shall we not judge, with the apostle of the Gentiles, that we must *henceforth live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us, and rose again?* The sum of our duty and happiness, O believer! is comprised in this precept—*As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord,* SO WALK YE IN HIM. The blood of sprinkling, kept by faith in the conscience, is the sure preservative from guilt; the holy secret of a comfortable and familiar walk with God. In this privilege let us go *from strength to strength,* lifting up our eyes to the *hills from whence cometh our help; showing forth the righteousness and the salvation of Jehovah all the day long:* and waiting for that great consummation, when, all the sorrows of earth's pilgrimage ended, and all its defilements washed away,

> "Heaven lifts her everlasting portals high,
> And bids the pure in heart behold their God!"

AMEN.

LIVING FAITH.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE SOCIETY

FOR THE

RELIEF OF THE DESTITUTE SICK.

On the evening of Sabbath, the first of Nov., 1801, in Brieto-street meeting house, Edinburgh.

SERMON VI.

LIVING FAITH.

ACTS XV. 9. COMPARED WITH GAL. V. 6.

Purifying their hearts by faith,—faith which worketh by love.

THE church of Christ, *chosen out of the world* to bear his cross and to partake of his holiness, has, from the very nature of her vocation, many obstacles to surmount, and many foes to vanquish. A warfare, on the issue of which are staked her privileges, her consolations, her everlasting hope, opens an ample field for exertion, and ought to concentrate her strength and wisdom. Unhappily, however, controversies about things which do not involve her substantial interests, have at at all times interrupted her peace, and marred her beauty. Weakness, prejudice, and passion found their way into the little family of the Master

himself; and, even after the descent of the Spirit of truth, invaded and violated his sanctuary. Disputes concerning the Mosaic ritual had arisen among Christians to so great a height, and were conducted with so much ardor and so little love, that the power of godliness was in danger of being stifled in a contest about the form, and the Head of the church deemed it necessary to interpose his rebuke. "Whether ye are called Jews or Gentiles, whether ye observe or neglect some formulas of the typical law, are not questions which should kindle your animosities, and exhaust your vigors. A more awful subject claims your inquiries. While you are occupied in vain jangling, the winged moments are hurrying your souls to their eternal state. Are you ready to depart? Is your title to the kingdom clear? Pause, listen, examine. *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature;* but a *faith of the operation of God;* but a faith which *purifies the heart, and works by love.*"

To us, my brethren, not less than to those early professors of the cross, is the heavenly oracle addressed. We, too, have our weaknesses, our prejudices, our passions, which often embark us in foolish and frivolous litigation. We, too, have immortal souls of which the whole world cannot repay the loss, and which are hastening to the

bar of God's righteousness. Come, then, let us endeavor to collect our wandering thoughts, to shut out the illusions of external habit, to put a negative on the importunities of sense, and try whether our religion will endure the ordeal of God's word. If our faith is genuine, it *purifies the heart, and works by love.* Precious faith, therefore, in its effects upon spiritual character; that faith which draws the line of immutable distinction between a believer and an unbeliever, and without which no man has a right to call himself a Christian, is the subject of our present consideration. And while the treasure is in an earthen vessel, may the excellency of the power be of God!

Before we attempt to analyze the operations of faith, we must obtain correct views of its nature.

Some imagine it to be a general profession of Christianity, and a decent compliance with its ceremonial. They accordingly compliment each other's religion, and are astonished and displeased if we demur at conceding that all are good Christians who have not ranged themselves under the banners of open infidelity.

Others, advancing a step farther, suppose that faith is an assent to the truth of the gospel founded on the investigation of its rational evidence. Without asking what proportion of the

multitudes who profess Christianity have either leisure, or means, or talents, for such an investigation, let us test this dogma by plain fact. Among those legions of accursed spirits whom God *has delivered into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment*, and their miserable associates of the human race who have already *perished from his presence*, there is not one who doubts the truth of revelation. Men may be sceptics in this world, but they carry no scepticism with them into the bottomless pit. They have there rational evidence which it is impossible to resist; evidence, shining in the blaze of everlasting burnings, that *every word of God is pure*. That faith, then, by which we are saved, must be altogether different from a conviction, however rational, which is yet compatible with a state of perdition. If any incline to set light by this representation, as taking the advantage of our ignorance, and retreating into obscurity which we cannot explore, let him open his eyes on the common occurrences of life. He may see, for there is not even the shadow of concealment, he may see both these good Christians of fashion, and these good Christians of argument, *without God in the world*—He may see them betraying those very tempers, and pursuing those very courses, by which the Bible describes *the workers of iniquity*—He may see them despising, re-

proaching, persecuting that profession and practice, which, if the scriptures are true, must belong to such as *live godly in Christ Jesus.* Of both these classes of pretended Christians the faith is found to be spurious, and at an infinite remove from the faith of God's elect: for in neither of them does it *purify the heart, or work by love.* The scriptures teach us better.

As faith, in general, is reliance upon testimony, and respects *solely* the veracity of the testifier; so that faith which constitutes a man a believer before God, is a simple and absolute reliance upon his testimony, exhibited in his word, on this solid and SINGLE ground, that *he is the God who cannot lie.* It was not a process of reasoning which riveted in Abraham's mind the persuasion that *in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed,* and procured him the appellation of *the father of the faithful.* It was an act of NAKED TRUST in the veracity of his covenant-God, not only *without,* but *above* and *against,* the *consultations of flesh and blood.* Abraham BELIEVED GOD, believed him in hope, against hope; and it *was counted to him for righteousness.* It is the same at this hour. *The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*—must silence every objection, and cut short every debate. And they who do not *thus* receive the scriptures, cannot give another proof that they believe in God, as a promising God, at all.

The testimony of God which faith respects, comprising the whole revelation of his will, centers particularly in the free grant which he has made of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to sinners of the human race; assuring them, that *whoever believeth on him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life;* that *he will be a Father unto them, and they shall be his sons and his daughters;* that he *will dwell in them, and walk in them, and be their God, blessing them,* in their precious Redeemer, *with all spiritual and heavenly blessings.* Now that faith after which we are inquiring, consists precisely in *receiving and resting upon Christ Jesus for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel,* that is, in the testimony of his Father.

This faith is not the creature of human power. It is a contradiction to suppose that men can argue themselves, or be argued by others, into a reliance upon the testimony of God. Because this implies a spiritual perception of his eternal veracity: whereas the reason of man is corrupted by sin, and the natural tendency of corrupted reason is to *change the truth of God into a lie.* Nothing can rise above its own level, nor pass the limits of its being. It were more rational to expect that men should be born of beasts, or angels of men, than that a principle of life and purity should be engendered by death in a mass of corruption: and carnal men are DEAD *in tres-*

passes and sins. Cast it, therefore, into the fairest mould, polish and adorn it with your most exquisite skill, *that which is born of the flesh* will still be *flesh;* weak, corrupt, abominable; *enmity against the law of God*, and, if possible, more rank enmity against the gospel of Jesus Christ. From this source it is vain to look for *faith in his blood.* We must seek it higher.

It is of divine original. A gift which *cometh down from the Father of lights: By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*

It is of *grace*—for it is one of those covenant-mercies which were purchased by the Savior's merit, and are freely bestowed for his sake. *It is given us, on the behalf of Christ, to believe on his name.*

Of *grace*—because it is a fruit of the gracious Spirit. As Jehovah the Sanctifier, he creates and preserves it in the soul. For this reason he is called the *Spirit of faith*, which is, therefore, *of the operation of God.*

From this faith there result two glorious effects. Let us consider them, in their turn, as they are stated in the text.

I. It *purifies the heart.*

Human depravity is a first principle in the oracles of God. *From within*, out *of the heart, proceed those evil thoughts*, and evil words, and evil

deeds, *which defile*, disgrace, and destroy *the man*. And he who refuses to admit the severe application of this doctrine to himself, has not yet arrived at the point from which he must set out in a course of real and consistent piety. He may, indeed, *flatter himself in his own eyes until his iniquity be found to be hateful*, but *who shall ascend into the hill of God? or who shall stand in his holy place? He*, and he only, *who has clean hands and a pure heart.* Now, as it is the grace of faith by which a sinner obtains that purity which qualifies him for the fellowship and kingdom of God, we are to inquire, in what the purity of the heart consists? and what is the influence of faith in producing it?

The *heart* is a term by which the scriptures frequently express the faculties and affections of man. As the pollutions of sin have pervaded them all, they all need the purification of grace.

At the head of the perverted tribe stands a guilty *conscience.* Stern, gloomy, suspicious, it cannot abide the presence of a righteous God; and yet lashes the offender with a whip of scorpions. To render the conscience pure, pardon must intervene, and shelter it from that curse which rouses both its resentments and its terrors. This is effected by *the blood of the covenant*, which, *speaking better things than the blood of Abel, sprinkles the heart from an evil conscience.*

The *will* is purified, when it is delivered from its rebellion against the authority of God, and cordially submits to his good pleasure. This, too, is from above: for *his people are made willing in the day of his power.*

The *understanding* is purified when its errors are corrected, and the mists of delusion dissipated. When its estimate of sin and holiness, of things carnal and things spiritual, of time and of eternity, corresponds with the sentence of the divine word. This also is from above. *The eyes of our understanding are enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.*

In fine, the *affections* are purified when they are diverted from objects trifling and base, to objects great and dignified. When they cease to be at the command of every hellish suggestion and every vagrant lust—When they add to the crucifixion of those profligate appetites in the gratification of which the ungodly man places his honor, his profit, and his paradise, their delight in a reconciled God as the infinite good—When they aspire to *things above, where Jesus Christ sitteth at God's right hand*, breathe after his communion, and are disciplined and chastened as becometh the affections of a breast which the Holy

Ghost condescends to make his temple.—Such affections are surely from heavenly inspiration: for thus saith God, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.*

While the purification of the heart, thus explained from the scriptures, is the work of the Divine Spirit, it is accomplished by the instrumentality of faith. For he *purifies the heart by faith.* Under his blessed direction, the grace of faith possesses a double influence.

1. As a principle of *moral suasion*,* it presents to the mind considerations the most forcible and tender for breaking the power of sin, and promoting the reign of holiness. The presence, the majesty, the holiness of God—the sanctity of his law—his everlasting love in the Lord Jesus—the affecting expression of that love in *setting him forth to be a propitiation for sin*—the wonders of his pardoning mercy—the grace of Christ Jesus himself in becoming *sin for them, that they might*

* By moral suasion is here meant, not that kind of reasoning which one graceless man may address to the understanding of another, but those persuasives to holiness which the Spirit of God in his word addresses to his grace in the heart. These faith applies and improves.

be made the righteousness of God in him—the condescension of the Holy Ghost, who deigns to dwell in them as their Sanctifier—the genius of their vocation—the connection of holy obedience with their own peace, their brethren's comfort, and their Master's glory—These, and similar motives which arise from the exercise of precious faith, operate mightily in causing believers to *walk humbly with their God. The love of Christ constraineth us*, even as a rational inducement, *to live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and rose again.* And while a graceless man is deterred from the commission of crime, not by a regard to God's authority, or by gratitude for his loving-kindness, but by calculations of prudence, or fear of penalty, a Christian, acting like himself, repels temptation with a more generous and filial remonstrance, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!*

But, brethren, I should wrong the Redeemer's truth, and enfeeble the consolations of his people, were I to confine the efficacy of faith in purifying the heart to the influence of *motive.* I have not mentioned its chief prerogative; for,

2. Faith is that invaluable grace by which we have both union and communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. In the moment of believing, I become, though naturally an accursed branch, *a tree of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah that*

he may be glorified: I am no longer *a root in a dry ground*, but am *planted by the rivers of water*, even the *water of life which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*—I am ingrafted into the true vine, and bring forth fruit in participating of its sap and fatness.—I am made a member of the body of Christ, *of his flesh, and of his bones;* so that the Spirit which animates his body pervades every fibre of my frame as one of its living members. His vital influence warms my heart. Because he lives, I live: because he is holy, I am holy; because he hath died unto sin, I reckon myself dead unto sin. This is the fruit of union.

Communion with him is, properly speaking, a *common interest* with him in his covenant-perfection. The benefits of this communion flow into the soul in the exercise of faith. Whatever Jesus has done for his people, (and their sanctification is the best part of his work,) he conveys to them in the promise of the gospel, and that promise is enjoyed in believing. It is by faith that I live upon the *great God my Savior*, and make use of him as *Jehovah my strength.* By faith I am privileged to go with boldness into the holiest of all, and, be it reverently spoken, to press my Father in heaven with reasons as strong why he should sanctify me, as he can address to me why I should endeavor to sanctify myself. Lord, am

I not thine? the called of thy grace? redeemed by the blood of thy dear Son? Hast thou not promised? Hast thou not sworn? Hast thou not pledged thy being, that none who come to thee in his name shall be rejected? Is it not for thy praise that my heart be purified, and I made meet for walking *in the light of thy countenance* among *the nations of the saved?* Wilt thou leave me to conflict alone, unaided, unfriended, with my furious corruptions, and my implacable foes? Wilt thou, though intreated *for thy servant David's sake,* refuse to work *in me all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power?* I cannot, *will not let thee go except thou bless me.* Such faith is strong; it is omnipotent; it lays hold on the very attributes of the Godhead, and brings prompt and effectual succor into the laboring spirit. This is the reason why it purifies the heart. I know, that to such as have never been brought under the bond of God's covenant, I am speaking unintelligible things. Blessed be his name, that, continuing carnal, ye cannot understand them. If ye could, our hope would be no better than your own. But I speak to some whose burning souls say Amen to the doctrine, and rejoice in the consolation; who, in the struggle with corruption and temptation, have *cried unto God with their voice, even unto God with their voice, and he heard their cry, and bowed his hea-*

vens, and came down; gave them deliverance and victory, and shed abroad in their bosoms the serenity of his grace. These are precious demonstrations of his purifying their hearts by faith.

It is obvious that the fruits of faith which have been now enumerated, cannot be exposed to the eye of the worldling. Deposited in the *hidden man of the heart*, they are privileges and *joys with which no stranger intermeddles.* Shall we thence conclude, that the faith from which they spring is unsusceptible of external proof, and never extends its benign influence beyond the happy individual who possesses it? By no means. This would be an error too gross for any but the theoretical religionist. The text ascribes it to a *social* effect: For,

II. It does not more certainly purify the heart, than it *worketh by love.*

Love is the master-principle of all good society. It is the holy bond which connects man with man, and angel with angel, and angels with men, and all with God. It is itself an emanation from his own purity. For *God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Consequently, the new man, whom regenerating grace creates in elected sinners, and whose activities are maintained by faith, must be governed by love. Its first and most natural exercise is toward that God who *hath loved them with an*

everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness hath drawn them. It is the apprehension by faith of Jehovah's love to them in Christ, anticipating them with mercy, forgiving them all trespasses, loading them with covenant-favor, which softens their obduracy, melts them into tenderness, and excites the gracious reaction of love toward their reconciled Father. *We love him*, says an apostle who had drunk deeply into the spirit of his Master, *we love him, because he first loved us.*

As an enemy to God is, by the very nature of his temper, an enemy to himself and to all other creatures, so one in whose heart the *love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost*, not only consults his own true happiness, but is led to consult the happiness of others. *Charity*, saith the apostle Paul, *suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.* The scriptures, indeed, mark love to the brethren as the great practical proof of our Christianity. Nothing can be more peremptory than the language of the beloved disciple—*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a* LIAR: *for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love*

God whom he hath not seen? On this point, however, there will be little dispute. Men are instinctively led to measure, by their social effects, all pretensions of love to God. The question before us, and of which the scriptural decision will be far from uniting the mass of suffrage, is, how *faith* works by love?

The apostle asserts, that the faith of a Christian, instead of being a merely speculative assent to the abstract truth of the gospel, is an active moral principle, which cannot have its just course without embodying itself in deeds of goodness. The reasons are many and manifest—By faith in Christ Jesus we are justified before God, our natural enmity against him is slain, and his love finds access to our hearts. By faith we embrace the *exceeding great and precious promises*, and, in embracing them, *are made partakers of the divine nature;* so that *we are filled with all the fullness of God;* and out of the abundance of the heart, not only does the mouth speak, but the man act; by faith we converse with our Lord Jesus Christ; are conformed to him; *follow him in the regeneration;* and learn to imitate that great example which he left us when he *went about doing good.* By faith we obtain the promised Spirit who sanctifies our powers both of mind and body, so that *we yield our members instruments of righteousness unto God.* By faith in Christ's blood, which re-

deems us from the curse of the law, we are also liberated from the vassalage of sin: for *the strength of sin is the law;* and, receiving the law as fulfilled and satisfied by his righteousness, come under its obligation in his covenant, and are enabled to keep it by his grace. Now *the fulfilling of the law is love;* love and kindness to God and our neighbor, in all our social relations: It is, therefore, impossible that faith should not work by love.

All the directions of the book of God for the practice of the moral virtues, consider them as the evolution of the principle of love residing in a heart which has been purified by faith. Our Lord's sermon on the mount, by the perversion of which many have seduced themselves and others into a lying confidence in their own fancied merits, was preached, not to the promiscuous multitude, but to his *disciples*, who professed *faith in his name*. And the scriptures of the apostles, especially the apostle of the Gentiles, follow the same order. They address their instructions to the *church of God*—to the *saints*—to such as have *obtained like precious faith with themselves*. Not a moral precept escapes from their pen, till they have displayed the riches of redeeming love. But when, like wise master-builders, they have laid a broad and stable foundation in the doctrines of faith, they rear without delay the fair fabric of

practical holiness. It is after they have conducted their pupils to the *holiest of all, through the new and living way which Jesus hath opened,* that you hear their exhorting voice, *Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Put off also all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision; barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God,* (for this very reason that ye *are* his elect,) *holy and beloved, put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things,* above bowels of mercies, above kindness, above humbleness of mind, above meekness, above long-suffering, above forbearance, above forgiveness, above all these things, *put on* CHARITY, *which is the bond of perfectness.* If the apostles, then, understood their own doctrine; or rather, if the Spirit by whom they spake

knows what is in man, we are not to look for real love, *i. e.* for true morality, from any who are not *the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* And, on the contrary, this faith is the most prolific source of good actions; because it purges the fountain of all action, and sends forth its vigorous and healthful streams, *purifying the heart, and working by love.*

I should be unfaithful, my brethren, to truth and to you, were I to dismiss this subject without employing its aid for repelling an attack which is often made upon the Christian religion—for refuting the calumny which pretended friends have thrown upon its peculiar glory, the doctrine of faith—for correcting the error of those who, separating faith from holiness, have *a name to live and are dead*—and for stimulating believers to evince by their example both the truth of their profession and the power of their faith.

The enemies of the gospel have invented various excuses for their infidelity. At one time, there is a defect of historical document; at another, they cannot surrender their reason to inexplicable mystery. Now, they are stumbled at a mission sanctioned by miracle: then, the proofs of revelation are too abstracted and metaphysical: and presently, they discover that no proof whatever can verify a revelation to a third person. But when they are driven from all these

subterfuges: when the Christian apologist has demonstrated that it is not the want of evidence, but of honesty; that it is not an enlightened understanding, but a corrupted heart, which impels them to reject the religion of Jesus, they turn hardily round and impeach its *moral* influence!! They will make it responsible for all the mischiefs and crimes, for all the sorrows, and convulsions, and ruins which have scourged the world since its first propagation.

Before such a charge can be substantiated, the structure of the human mind must be altered, the nature of things reversed, the doctrine of principle and motive abandoned forever. It is only for the forlorn hope of impiety to engage in an enterprise so mad and desperate. Say, can a religion which commands me to *love my neighbor as myself*, generate or foster malignant and murderous passions? Can a religion which assures me that *all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*, encourage a spirit of dissimulation and fraud? Can a religion which requires me to *possess my vessel in sanctification and honor*, indulge me in violating the laws of sexual purity, in breaking up the sanctuary of my neighbor's peace, in throwing upon the mercy of scandal's clarion the fair fame of female virtue? Can a religion which forbids me to be *conformed to this world*, cherish that infuriate ambi-

tion which hurls desolation over the earth, and fertilizes her fields with the blood of men? Can a religion—But I forbear—*From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts?* Those very lusts from which it is the province of faith to purify the heart? The infidel pleads for his unholy propensions, on the pretext that they are *innocent* because they are *natural:* and when a thousand curses to himself and to society follow their indulgence, he charges the consequence upon a religion which enjoins their crucifixion, and which, to give them their career, he trampled under foot. But stop, vain man! Was it the religion of Jesus Christ which, on its first promulgation, *breathed out threatenings and slaughter, shut up the saints in prison, punished them oft in every synagogue, compelled them to blaspheme, and, being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them even unto strange cities?* Was it the religion of Jesus Christ which, in its subsequent progress, illuminated the city of Rome with the conflagration of a thousand stakes, consuming, by the most excruciating of deaths, a thousand guiltless victims?* Was it the religion of Jesus Christ which, at a later period, when the Tiber overflowed, or the Nile did not overflow; when the earth quaked, or the heavens withheld their rain;

* Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. cap. 44.

when famine or pestilence smote the nations, ordered its opposers to the lions?* Was it in obedience to the religion of Jesus Christ, after the expulsion of pagan idolatry, that the *mother of harlots and abominations of the earth* became *drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs*?—Was it the religion of Jesus Christ which, after being rejected with marks of unexampled insult, suggested to the knight-errants of blasphemy the project of regenerating the world by the power of atheistical philosophy? Was it this religion which taught them to blot out the great moral institute of society, the sabbath of the Lord, to extinguish the best affections of the human heart, to break asunder the strongest ties of human life, and to subvert the basis of human relations by exploding the marriage-covenant? This, which instigated them to offer up hecatombs of human sacrifices to every rising and every setting sun; to hew down, with equal indifference, the venerable matron and her hoary lord, the vigorous youth, the blooming maid, the sportive boy, and the prattling babe; and, while they were thus writing the history of their philosophical experiments in the blood of the dead and the tears of the living, to boast the victories of their *virtue*? But my soul sickens—Ah, no! *The wisdom which cometh from above*, that wisdom

* Tertull. Apolog. cap. 40.

which the gospel teaches, *is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of compassion and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.* Such was its imposing aspect in primitive ages. "Give me a man," said a celebrated father of the church, the eloquent Lactantius, "give me a man passionate, slanderous, ungovernable: with a very few words of God I will render him as placid as a lamb. Give me a man greedy, avaricious, penurious: I will give him back to you liberal, and lavishing his gold with a munificent hand. Give me a man who shrinks from pain and death; and he shall presently contemn the stake, the gibbet, the wild beast. Give me one who is libidinous, an adulterer, a debauchee; and you shall see him sober, chaste, temperate. Give me one cruel and blood-thirsty; and that fury of his shall be converted into clemency itself. Give me one addicted to injustice, to folly, to crime; and he shall, without delay, become just, and prudent, and harmless."*

Similar, in proportion to its reception by faith, are still the effects of this blessed gospel. What has exploded those vices which, though once practiced even by philosophers, cannot now be so much as named? What has softened the manners and refined the intercourse of men? What is it which turns any of them from sin to God, and

* Lact. De falsa Sapientia, lib. iii. cap. 25.

makes them conscientious, humble, pure, though at the expense of ridicule and scorn from the licentious and the gay? What has espoused the cause of suffering humanity? Who explores the hospital, the dungeon, the darksome retreat of unknown, unpitied anguish? The infidel philosopher? Alas, he amuses himself with dreams of universal benevolence, while the wretch perishes unheeded at his feet, and scruples not to murder the species in *detail*, that he may promote its happiness in *the gross!* On his proud list of *general* benefactors you will look in vain for the name of a HOWARD; and in their system of conduct your search will be equally fruitless for the traces of his spirit. Christianity claims as her own both the man and his principles. *She* formed his character, sketched his plans, and inspired his zeal. And might the modesty of goodness be overcome, might the sympathies of the heart assume visible form, might secret and silent philanthropy be called into view, ten thousand Howards would issue, at this moment, from her temples, from the habitations of her sons, from the dreary abodes of sickness and of death. Tell me not of those foul deeds which have been perpetrated in her name. Tell me not that her annals are filled with the exploits of imposture and fanaticism; that her priests and her princes have been ambitious, profligate, and cruel; that they have bared

the arm of persecution, and shed innocent blood upon the rack and the scaffold, at the stake and in the field: that they have converted whole nations into hordes of banditti, and led them under the auspices of the cross to pillage and massacre their brethren who boasted only the "simple virtues" of pagans and infidels. The question is not what actions her name has been abused to sanctify, but what have accorded with her principles, and are prompted by her spirit? It is no discovery of yesterday that Satan *is transformed into an angel of light;* and, therefore, *no great thing if his ministers also be transformed into ministers of righteousness.* Ignorance and dishonesty have often borrowed a Christian guise for the more successful practice of knavery and rapine. But when they have violated all the maxims of the Christian religion, when they have contemned her remonstrances, and stifled her cries, shall they be permitted to plead her authority? Or shall the scoffer insult her with the charge of being their accomplice and adviser? No! In so far as men do not study *whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report,* they evince not the power of faith, but the power of unbelief; in other words, not the spirit of the gospel, but a spirit directly opposed to it, *i. e.* the spirit of infidelity. If, then, you think to justify your incredulity by showing

a man, who to a profession of Christianity adds a life of crime, the indignant gospel tears the mask from his face, and exposes to your view the features of a brother. Whatever be his profession, we disown his kindred; he acts wickedly, not because he is a Christian, but because he is *not* a Christian. His crimes conspire with his hypocrisy to prove him an infidel.

Here we must part with some who have cheerfully accompanied us in the detection and reproof of avowed unbelievers. For I am to employ the doctrine of the text for refuting the calumny which pretended friends have thrown upon the peculiar glory of Christianity, the doctrine of *faith*.

Multitudes, and would to God that none of them were found among the teachers of religion, multitudes who profess warm zeal for revelation, are yet hostile to all those cardinal truths which alone render it worthy of a struggle. Omitting the mockery of such as call Christ *Lord, Lord*, while they rob him of every perfection which qualifies him to be the Savior of sinners, let me call your attention to those whose enmity is particularly directed against the doctrine that has been preached to you this evening. Nothing, to use their own style, can exceed their veneration for religion in general; but if you venture to speak of the righteousness of the Son of God,

"imputed to us, and received by faith alone;" if you insist on the desperate wickedness of the heart, and the necessity of Almighty Power to regenerate and cleanse it; if you rejoice in the blessedness of that union with the Lord Jesus which places you beyond the reach of condemnation, so that *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heighth, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from his love*, or shut you out of his kingdom, you must expect to pass, with *rational* Christians, for a weak though perhaps well-meaning enthusiast: nay, you must expect to hear those blessed truths which are the life of your soul, stigmatized as relaxing the obligations of the moral law, as withdrawing the most cogent motives to obey its precepts, as ministering incentives to all ungodliness. Impossible! Nothing but ignorance of the grace of God in its saving energy, could give birth or aliment to such a slander. It proceeds on the supposition that a sinner may be pardoned, and not sanctified; that he may be delivered from penalty, and yet retain an unabated affection for his lusts. Were this the fact, did faith in Christ's blood set him free from the condemning authority of God's law, and yet leave him under the tyranny of sinful habits, there is no doubt that it would encourage him *to work all uncleanness with*

greediness. But the reverse is true. The blood of Jesus Christ, applied by faith, does not more certainly abolish guilt, than it paralyzes lust. *He is made of God unto us,* in a connection which nothing can dissolve, *wisdom, and righteousness, and* SANCTIFICATION. *Our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* The grace of faith is the leading faculty of that *new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* Holiness is the proper element of a believer, as sin is the proper element of an unbeliever. And, therefore, although the *notion* of grace may be abused to licentiousness, the *principle* never can; for it is that principle from which we learn to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.* To insinuate, then, that the doctrine of free and plenary justification by faith in Christ Jesus tends to licentiousness, is to give the lie direct to the testimony of the Holy Ghost, and to the uniform experience of his people. Whoever cherishes such an opinion, however highly esteemed by himself or by others, is not a Christian; he is *in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.* But there is no cause of wonder. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.* It has been so from the beginning, and will con-

tinue so to the end. The objection which he makes, at this hour, to the doctrine of grace, is as stale as it is unfounded. It is the very objection which was combated by the apostle Paul. *What shall we say then?* exclaimed his adversaries, when he preached justification by faith through the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and the absolute certainty of being saved from wrath through him in virtue of believing; *what shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* Or, in modern language, does not this doctrine of yours tempt men to throw the rein upon the neck of their passions, by removing the fear of condemnation, and especially by furnishing them with the pretext, that the more they sin, the more is grace exalted in their pardon, seeing that *where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound?* The apostle admits, that the depraved heart is prone to draw such a conclusion, and that it was actually drawn by his enemies, who took occasion from it to represent him as *making void the law.* But he repels it with the most indignant reprobation. *God forbid!* The inference is absurd. *How shall we that are* DEAD *to sin* LIVE *any longer therein?* That doctrine, therefore, which wicked men never accuse of leading to licentiousness, is NOT the doctrine of God's word. That doctrine, on the contrary, against which, by misrepresenting it, they bring

this accusation, is the very doctrine of the apostle. But its true and only effect which we maintain, which the scriptures teach, and which all believers experience and exemplify, is, that *sin shall not reign in their mortal body, that they should fulfill it in the lusts thereof.*

Of the same nature, and from the same source with the calumny which I have endeavored to refute, is the practical error of many who, separating faith from holiness, *have a name to live and are dead.* The error must be rectified, for it is fatal. Some console themselves with their *doctrinal* accuracy, while their hearts and conduct are estranged from moral rectitude. They hope that their faith, however inactive, shall save them at last. Others, in the opposite extreme, disregarding faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, trust in their upright intentions and actions. They know little of what Christians call *believing*, but they are good *moral* men. Their gospel is the trite and delusive aphorism,

"He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right;"

not considering that

"He can't be right, whose faith is in the wrong."

They talk, indeed, on both sides, with much familiarity, of "our holy religion," as if its best influences had descended upon themselves. Holy

religion it is: but what made it *yours?* One of you does not pretend to *have* RECEIVED *Christ Jesus the Lord;* the other, notwithstanding his profession, has no solicitude to WALK *in him:* and both are equally far from the salvation of God. Jesus Christ is *the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him:* no man entertains good thoughts, or performs good works, without being a *partaker of his holiness.* Every plant which his heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. At the great day of his appearance to judge the world in righteousness, no virtue will be approved which did not grow upon his cross, was not consecrated by his blood, and nourished by his Spirit. *Such* virtues, however they may be applauded here, are only brilliant acts of rebellion against him, and will not for one moment reprieve the rebels from the *damnation of hell.* Nor let those whose belief does not purify the heart, nor work by love, flatter themselves that their condition is better, or that their doom shall be more tolerable. Whatever judgment shall be measured to others, *they who know their Lord's will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* Be not deceived. The threatening bears directly upon you. You profess to know God, but in works you deny him. *Your* inconsistency reproaches his truth, and causes his enemies to blaspheme. *You* lay stumbling-blocks

in the way of the unwary. *You* multiply the victims of that very infidelity against which you declaim: and, in as far as they have been seduced by your example, their blood shall be required at your hands. For yourselves, if you die without being *renewed in the spirit of your minds*, your faith will not save you. The farce of a mock profession will terminate in the tragedy of real and everlasting wo. Oh, then, *while it is called* TO-DAY *harden not your hearts!* To sinners of every class and character, the forgiveness of God is preached. From his throne in heaven the Savior speaks this evening. *Unto you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men! Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: behold, I bring near my righteousness.* In him is grace, and peace, and life. Now, therefore, *choose life that ye may live.* And may his blessed Spirit visit you with his salvation, creating in you that faith which purifies the heart, and works by love!

Finally. Let Christians be admonished by the doctrine of my text to evince, in their behavior, both the truth of their profession and the power of their faith.

They cannot too often nor too solemnly repeat the question of their Lord, *What do ye* MORE *than others?* It is not enough for them to equal, they must excel their neighbors. They have mercies, motives, means, peculiar to themselves.

They have a living principle of righteousness in their own hearts; and in their great Redeemer, they have, as the fountain of their supply, *all the fullness of the Godhead*. It is but reasonable that much should be required of them to whom much is given. Let your whole persons, O believers, be temples of God. Set your affections on things above, where Jesus Christ sitteth at his right hand. Remember, that every one who hath the hope of seeing Jesus as he is, *purifieth himself even as he is pure*. Walk in love as he hath loved you. Let this amiable grace shed her radiance over your character, and breathe her sweetness into your actions. Compel, by her charms, the homage of the profane. Cleave not to earth, because your treasure is in heaven. Make use of it to exercise the benevolence of the gospel, to glorify your Father who is in heaven, to diffuse comfort and joy among the suffering and disconsolate. *To do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* This evening presents you with an opportunity of showing that faith worketh by love. The Society, on whose account I address you, carry in their very name a resistless appeal to the sentiments of men and of Christians. Devoting their labors to "the relief of the DESTITUTE SICK," they have sought out and succored, not here and there a solitary individual, but scores, and hundreds,

and thousands of them that were *ready to perish*. Sickness, though softened by the aids of the healing art, by the sympathy of friends, and by every external accommodation, is no small trial of patience and religion. But to be both SICK and DESTITUTE is one of the bitterest draughts in the cup of human misery. Far from me be the attempt to harrow your feelings with images of fictitious wo. Recital must draw a vail over a large portion of the truth itself. I barely mention that the mass of sorrow which you are called to alleviate appears in as many forms as there are affinities among men.

Is there in this assembly a father, the sons of whose youth are the stay of his age and the hope of his family? In yonder cell lies a man of gray hairs, crushed by poverty, and tortured by disease. His children are scattered abroad, or have long since descended into the tomb. The sound of "father" never salutes his ears: he is a stranger in his own country: his only companions are want and anguish.

Is there here a wife of youth encircled with domestic joys? or is there one whose heart, though solaced with a thousand outward blessings, calls back the aching remembrance of the loved relation? Behold that daughter of grief. The fever rankles in her veins. She has no partner dearer than her own soul, on whose bosom

she may recline her throbbing head. Her name is *Widow*. Desolate, forsaken, helpless, she is stretched on the ground. The wintry blast howls through her habitation, and famine keeps the door.

Is there a mother here, whose eyes fill in the tenderness of bliss, while health paints the cheeks of her little offspring, and they play around her in all the gayety of infantine simplicity? I plead for a mother, the toil of whose hands was the bread of her children. The bed of languishing destroys her strength and their sustenance. *The son of her womb* turns pale in her feeble arms, her heart is wrung with double anguish, while, unconscious of the source of his pain, he cries for bread, and there is none to give it.

Is there here a man of public spirit who exults in the return of plenty and of peace? Let him think of those who suffer under the stern arrest of hunger and disease. Ah! let him think, that this wretchedness belongs to the wife and family of the soldier who has fought the battles of his country. The messenger of peace arrives: the murmur of the crowd swells into ecstasy: their shout echoes through the hills. She raises her drooping head, and hears, not that her friend and helper is at hand, but that herself is a widow and her children fatherless. The blood of her hus-

band and of their father has flowed for the common safety—He shall never return.

Is there a Christian here, who knows how to *do good unto all, but especially to them that are of the household of faith?* Among these afflicted who are sinking under their infirmities, and *have not where to lay their heads*, are some to whom the celestials minister, and who are *fellow-heirs with Christ in glory.* I state the facts; I use no arguments; I leave the result with your consciences, your hearts, and your God.

MESSIAH'S THRONE.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AT THEIR

Eighth Annual Meeting, in Tottenham-Court Chapel, on the evening of Thursday, the 13th of May, 1802.

SERMON VII.

MESSIAH'S THRONE

HEB. I. 8.

But unto the Son, he saith, Thy Throne, O God, is forever and ever.

In the all-important argument which occupies this epistle, Paul assumes, what the believing Hebrews had already professed, that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah. To prepare them for the consequences of their own principle; a principle involving nothing less than the abolition of their law, the subversion of their state, the ruin of their city, the final extinction of their carnal hopes, he leads them to the doctrine of their Redeemer's person in order to explain the nature of his offices, to evince the value of his spiritual salvation, and to show, in both, the accomplishment of their economy which was *now*

ready to vanish away. Under no apprehension of betraying the unwary into idolatrous homage, by giving to the Lord Jesus greater glory than is *due unto his name*, the apostle sets out with ascribing to him excellence and attributes which belong to no creature. Creatures of most elevated rank are introduced; but it is to display, by contrast, the pre-eminence of Him who is *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.* Angels are great in might and in dignity; but *unto them hath he not put in subjection the world to come. Unto which of them said he, at any time, Thou art my son?* To which of them, *Sit thou at my right hand?* He saith, they are spirits, *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who are the heirs of salvation. But unto the* SON, in a style which annihilates competition and comparison, *unto the* SON he saith, *thy throne,* O GOD, *is forever and ever.*

Brethren, if the majesty of Jesus is the subject which the Holy Ghost selected for the encouragement and consolation of his people, when he was shaking the earth and the heavens, and diffusing his gospel among the nations; can it be otherwise than suitable and precious to us on this occasion? Shall it not expand our views, and warm our hearts, and nerve our arm, in our efforts to exalt his fame? Let me implore, then, the aid of your prayers; but far more importunately the

aids of his own Spirit, while I speak of the *things which concern the King:* those great things contained in the text—his personal glory—his sovereign rule.

I. His *personal glory* shines forth in the name by which he is revealed; a name above every name, THY *throne*—O GOD!

To the single eye nothing can be more evident, in the

First place, than that the Holy Ghost here asserts the *essential deity* of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of his enemies, whom he will *make his footstool*, some have, indeed, controverted this position, and endeavored to blot out the text from the catalogue of his witnesses. Instead of *thy throne, O God*, they would compel us, by a perversion of phraseology, of figure, and of sense, to read, "God is thy throne;" converting the great and dreadful God into a symbol of authority in one of his own creatures. The scriptures, it seems, may utter contradictions or impiety, but the divinity of the Son they shall not attest. The crown, however, which "flourishes on his head," is not to be torn away; nor the anchor of our hope to be wrested from us, by the rude hand of licentious criticism.

I cannot find, in the lively oracles, a single distinctive mark of deity which is not applied, without reserve or limitation, to the only begotten

Son. *All things whatsoever the Father hath, are* HIS. *Who* is that mysterious WORD, that was *in the* BEGINNING, *with God?* *Who* is the *Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, the Almighty?* *Who* is he that *knows what is in man*, because he searches the deep and dark recesses of the heart? *Who* is the Omnipresent, that has promised, *Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?* the light of whose countenance is, at the same moment, the joy of heaven and the salvation of earth? who is incircled by the seraphim on high, and *walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks?* who is in this assembly? in all the assemblies of his people? in every worshiping family? in every closet of prayer? in every holy heart? *Whose hands have stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?* *Who* hath replenished them with inhabitants, and garnished them with beauty, having created all things that are in both, *visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers?* By *whom* do *all things consist?* *Who* is *the Governor among the nations, having on his vesture and on his thigh a name written*, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. *Whom* is it the Father's will that *all men should honor even as they honor himself?* *Whom* has he commanded his angels to worship? *whom* to obey? Before *whom* do the

devils tremble? *Who* is qualified to redeem millions of sinners *from the wrath to come*, and preserve them, by his grace, to his everlasting kingdom? *Who* raiseth the dead, *having life in himself, to quicken whom he will*, so that at his voice, *all who are in their graves shall come forth;* —*and death and hell* surrender their numerous and forgotten captives? *Who* shall weigh, in the balance of judgment, the destinies of angels and men? dispose of the thrones of paradise? and bestow eternal life? Shall I submit to the decision of reason? Shall I ask a response from heaven? Shall I summon the devils from their *chains of darkness?* The response from heaven sounds in my ears; reason approves, and the devils confess—This, O Christians, is none other than the GREAT GOD our SAVIOR!

Indeed, my brethren, the doctrine of our Lord's divinity is not, as a *fact*, more interesting to our faith, than, as a *principle*, it is essential to our hope. If he were not *the true God*, he could not be *eternal life*. When pressed down by guilt and languishing for happiness, I look around for a deliverer such as my conscience and my heart and the word of God assure me I need, insult not my agony, by directing me to a creature—to a man, a mere man like myself! A creature! a man! My Redeemer owns my *person*. My immortal spirit is his *property*. When I come to die, I must commit it into his

hands. My soul! my infinitely precious soul committed to a mere man! become the property of a mere man! I would not, thus, intrust my *body*, to the highest angel who burns in the temple above. It is only the *Father of spirits*, that can have *property* in spirits, and be their refuge in the hour of transition from the present to the approaching world. In short, my brethren, the divinity of Jesus is, in the system of grace, the sun to which all its parts are subordinate, and all their stations refer—which binds them in sacred concord; and imparts to them their radiance, and life, and vigor. Take from it this central luminary, and the glory is departed—Its holy harmonies are broken—The elements rush to chaos—The light of salvation is extinguished forever!

But it is not the deity of the Son, simply considered, to which the text confines our attention. We are in the

Second place to contemplate it as subsisting in a personal union with the human nature.

Long before this epistle was written had he *by himself purged our sins, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.* It is, therefore, as *God manifested in the flesh;* as my own brother, while he is *the express image of the Father's person*, as the Mediator of the new covenant, that he is seated on the throne. Of this throne, to which the pretensions of a creature

were mad and blasphemous, the majesty is, indeed, maintained by his divine power; but the foundation is laid in his mediatorial character. I need not prove to this audience, that all his gracious offices and all his redeeming work originated in the love and the election of his Father. Obedient to that will, which fully accorded with his own, he came down from heaven; tabernacled in our clay; was *a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs;* submitted to the *contradictions of sinners*, the temptations of the old serpent, and the wrath of an avenging God. In the merit of his obedience which threw a lustre round the divine law; and in the atonement of his death by which *he offered himself a sacrifice without spot unto God*, repairing the injuries of man's rebellion, expiating sin through the blood of his cross; and conciliating its pardon with infinite purity, and unalterable truth; summarily, in his performing those conditions on which was suspended all God's mercy to man, and all man's enjoyment of God, in these stupendous *works of righteousness* are we to look for the cause of his present glory. *He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven*

and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Exalted thus, *to be a Prince and a Savior*, he fills heaven with his beauty, and obtains from its blest inhabitants, the purest and most reverential praise. *Worthy*, cry the mingled voices of his angels and his redeemed, *worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Worthy*, again cry his redeemed, in a song which belongs not to the angels, but in which with holy ecstasy, we will join, *worthy art thou, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.*

Delightful, brethren, transcendently delightful were it to dwell upon this theme. But we must refrain; and having taken a transient glance at our Redeemer's personal glory, let us turn to the

II. View which the text exhibits—the view of his *sovereign rule*——Thy THRONE, *O God, is forever and ever.*

The mediatorial kingdom of Christ Jesus, directed and upheld by his divinity, is now the object of our contemplation. To advance Jehovah's glory in the salvation of men, is the purpose of its erection. Though earth is the scene and human life the limit, of those great opera-

tions by which they are interested in its mercies, and prepared for its consummation; its principles, its provisions, its issues, are eternal. When it rises up before us in all its grandeur of design, collecting and conducting to the heavens of God millions of immortals, in comparison with the least of whom the destruction of the material universe were a thing of nought, whatever the carnal mind calls vast and magnificent shrinks away into nothing.

But it is not so much the nature of Messiah's kingdom on which I am to insist, as its *stability*, its *administration*, and the *prospects* which they open to the *church of God*.

Messiah's throne is not one of those airy fabrics which are reared by vanity and overthrown by time: it is fixed of old: it is stable and cannot be shaken, for

(1.) It is the throne of God. He who sitteth on it is the Omnipotent. Universal being is in his hand. Revolution, force, fear, as applied to his kingdom, are words without meaning. Rise up in rebellion, if thou hast courage. Associate with thee the whole mass of infernal power. Begin with the ruin of whatever is fair and good in this little globe—Pass from hence to pluck the sun out of his place—and roll the volume of desolation through the starry world—What hast thou done unto him? It is the puny menace of

a worm against Him whose frown is perdition. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.*

(2.) With the stability which Messiah's Godhead communicates to his throne, let us connect the stability resulting from his Father's covenant.

His throne is founded not merely in strength, but in right. God hath laid the government upon the shoulder of his holy child Jesus, and set him upon mount Zion as his king forever. He has promised, and sworn, to *build up his throne to all generations;* to *make it endure as the days of heaven;* to *beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness,* adds he, *and my mercy shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. Hath he said it, and will he not do it? Hath he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass?* Whatever disappointments rebuke the visionary projects of men, or the more crafty schemes of Satan, *the counsel of the Lord,* THAT *shall stand.* The blood of sprinkling, which sealed all the promises made to Messiah, and binds down his Father's faithfulness to their accomplishment, witnesses continually in the heavenly sanctuary. *He must,* therefore, *reign till he have put all his enemies under his feet.* And although the dispensation of his authority shall, upon this event, be changed; and he shall deliver it up, in its

present form, to the Father, he shall still remain, in his substantial glory, *a priest upon his throne*, to be the eternal bond of our union, and the eternal medium of our fellowship, with the living God.

Seeing that the throne of our King is as immovable as it is exalted, let us *with joy draw water out of that well of salvation* which is opened to us in the

Administration of his kingdom. Here we must consider *its general characters*, and the *means* by which it operates.

The general characters which I shall illustrate, are the following:

(1.) *Mystery.*—He is the unsearchable God, and his government must be like himself. *Facts* concerning both he has graciously revealed. These we must admit upon the credit of his own testimony; with these we must satisfy our wishes, and limit our inquiry. *To intrude into those things which he hath not seen* because God has not disclosed them, whether they relate to his arrangements for this world or the next, is the arrogance of one *vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.* There are secrets in our Lord's procedure which he will not explain to us in this life, and which may not, perhaps, be explained in the life to come. We cannot tell how he makes evil the minister of good: how he

combines physical and moral agencies of different kind and order, in the production of blessings. We cannot so much as conjecture what bearings the system of redemption, in every part of its process, may have upon the relations of the universe; nor even what may be all the connections of providence in the occurrences of this moment, or of the last. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: it is high, we cannot attain it.* Our Sovereign's *way is in the sea, and his path in the deep waters; and his footsteps are not known.* When, therefore, we are surrounded with difficulty; when we cannot unriddle his conduct in particular dispensations, we must remember that he is God; that we are to *walk by faith;* and to trust him as implicitly when we are in *the valley of the shadow of death*, as when his *candle shines upon our heads.*—We must remember that it is not for us to be admitted into the cabinet of the King of kings; that creatures constituted as we are could not sustain the view of his unvailed agency; that it would confound, and scatter, and annihilate our little intellects. As often, then, as he retires from our observation, blending goodness with majesty, let us lay our hands upon our mouths, and worship. This stateliness of our King can afford us no just ground of uneasiness. On the

contrary, it contributes to our tranquillity: For we know,

(2.) That if his administration is mysterious, it is also *wise.*

Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite. That infinite understanding watches over, and arranges, and directs all the affairs of his church and of the world. *We* are perplexed at every step; embarrassed by opposition; lost in confusion; fretted by disappointment; and ready to conclude, in our haste, that all things are against our own good and our Master's honor. But *this is our infirmity;* it is the dictate of impatience and indiscretion. We forget the *years of the right hand of the Most High.* We are slow of heart in learning a lesson which shall soothe our spirits at the expense of our pride. We turn away from the consolation to be derived from believing that though we know not the connections and results of holy providence, our Lord Jesus knows them perfectly. With him there is no irregularity, no chance, no conjecture. Disposed before his eye in the most luminous and exquisite order, the whole series of events occupy the very place and crisis where they are most effectually to subserve the purposes of his love. Not a moment of time is wasted, nor a fragment of action misapplied. What he does we do not in-

deed know at present, but, as far as we shall be permitted to know hereafter, we shall see that his most inscrutable procedure was guided by consummate wisdom; that our choice was often as foolish as our petulance was provoking; that the success of our own wishes would have been our most painful chastisement, would have diminished our happiness, and detracted from his praise. Let us study, therefore, brethren, to subject our ignorance to his knowledge; instead of prescribing, to obey; instead of questioning, to believe: to perform our part without that despondency which betrays a fear that our Lord may neglect his, and tacitly accuses him of a less concern than we feel for the glory of his own name. Let us not shrink from this duty as imposing too rigorous a condition upon our obedience, for a

(3d.) Character of Messiah's administration is *righteousness. The sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre.* If *clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* In the times of old, his redeemed *wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; but, nevertheless, he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.* He loves his church and the members of it too tenderly to lay upon them any burdens, or expose them to any trials, which are not in-

dispensable to their good. It is right for them to *go through fire and through water*, that he may *bring them out into a wealthy place*—right to *endure chastening* that *they may be partakers of his holiness*—right to *have the sentence of death in themselves*, that they may *trust in the living God, and that his strength may be perfect in their weakness.* It is right that he should *endure with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:* that he should permit *iniquity to abound, the love of many to wax cold*, and the dangers of his church to accumulate, till the interposition of his arm be necessary and decisive. In the the day of final retribution not one mouth shall be opened to complain of injustice. It will be seen that *the Judge of all the earth has done right; that the works of his hands have been verity and judgment*, and done, every one of them, in *truth and uprightness.* Let us, then, think not only respectfully but reverently of his dispensations, repress the voice of murmur, and rebuke the spirit of discontent; wait, in faith and patience, till he become his own interpreter, when *the heavens shall declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.*

You will anticipate me in enumerating the *means* which Messiah employs in the administration of his kingdom.

(1.) The *gospel*, of which himself, as an all-sufficient and condescending Savior, is the great and affecting theme. Derided by the world, it is, nevertheless, effectual to the salvation of them who believe. *We preach Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* The doctrine of the cross connected with evangelical ordinances—the ministry of reconciliation; the holy sabbath; the sacraments of his covenant: briefly, the whole system of instituted worship, is the *rod of the Redeemer's strength* by which he subdues sinners to himself; rules even *in the midst of his enemies;* exercises his glorious authority in his church, and exhibits a visible proof to men and angels, that he is King in Zion.

(2.) The efficient means to which the gospel owes its success, and the name of Jesus its praise, is the *agency of the Holy Ghost.*

Christianity is *the ministration of the Spirit.* All real and sanctifying knowledge of the truth and love of God is from his inspiration. It was the last and best promise which the Savior made to his afflicted disciples at the moment of parting, *I will send the* Comforter, *the Spirit of truth; He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you.* It is he who

convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment—who infuses resistless vigor into means otherwise weak and useless. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God*, God the Spirit, *to the pulling down of strong holds.* Without his benediction, the ministry of an archangel would never *convert one sinner from the error of his way.* But when he descends, with his life-giving influence from God out of heaven, then *foolish things of the world confound the wise; and weak things of the world confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, bring to nought things which are.* It is this ministration of the Spirit which renders the preaching of the gospel to *men dead in trespasses and sins* a *reasonable* service. When I am set down in the *valley of vision*, and view the bones, *very many and very dry*, and am desired to try the effect of my own ability in recalling them to life, I will fold my hands and stand mute in astonishment and despair. But when the Lord God commands me to speak in HIS name, my closed lips shall be opened; when he calls upon *the breath from the four winds to breathe upon the slain that they may live*, I will prophecy without fear—*O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord*, and, obedient to his voice, they *shall*

come together, bone to his bone; shall be covered with sinews and flesh; shall receive new life, and *stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.* In this manner, from the graves of nature, and the dry bones of natural men, does the Holy Spirit recruit the *armies of the living God*, and make them, collectively and individually, *a name, and a praise, and a glory*, to the *Captain of their salvation.*

(3.) Among the instruments which the Lord Jesus employs in the administration of his government, are *the resources of the physical and moral world.*

Supreme in heaven and in earth, *upholding all things by the word of his power*, the universe is his magazine of means. Nothing which acts or exists, is exempted from promoting in its own place the purposes of his kingdom. Beings rational and irrational; animate and inanimate; the heavens above and the earth below; the obedience of sanctified, and the disobedience of unsanctified, men; all holy spirits; all damned spirits: in one word, every agency, every element, every atom, are but the ministers of his will, and concur in the execution of his designs. And this he will demonstrate to the confusion of his enemies, and the joy of his people, in that *great and terrible day* when he *shall sit upon the*

throne of his glory, and dispense ultimate judgment to the quick and the dead.

Upon these hills of holiness, the stability of Messiah's throne, and the perfect administration of his kingdom, let us take our station, and survey the

Prospects which rise up before the church of God.

When I look upon the magnificent scene, I cannot repress the salutation, *Hail thou that art highly favored!*

She has the prospect of preservation, of increase, and of triumph.

(1.) The prospect of *preservation*.

The long existence of the Christian church would be pronounced, upon common principles of reasoning, impossible. She finds in every man a natural and inveterate enemy. To encounter and overcome the unanimous hostility of the world, she boasts no political stratagem, no disciplined legions, no outward coercion of any kind. Yet her expectation is that she shall live forever. To mock this hope, and blot out her memorial from under heaven, the most furious efforts of fanaticism, the most ingenious arts of statesmen, the concentrated strength of empires, have been frequently and perseveringly applied. The blood of her sons and her daughters has streamed like water; the smoke of the

scaffold and the stake, where they won the crown of martyrdom in the cause of Jesus, has ascended in thick volumes to the skies. The tribes of persecution have sported over her woes, and erected monuments, as they imagined, of her perpetual ruin. But where are her tyrants, and where their empires? the tyrants have long since gone to their own place; their names have descended upon the roll of infamy; their empires have passed, like shadows over the rock—they have successively disappeared, and left not a trace behind!

But what became of the church? She rose from her ashes fresh in beauty and in might. Celestial glory beamed around her; she dashed down the monumental marble of her foes, and they who hated her fled before her. She has celebrated the funeral of kings and kingdoms that plotted her destruction; and, with the inscriptions of their pride, has transmitted to posterity the record of their shame. How shall this phenomenon be explained? We are, at the present moment, witnesses of the fact; but who can unfold the mystery? This blessed book, the book of truth and life, has made our wonder to cease. THE LORD HER GOD IN THE MIDST OF HER IS MIGHTY. His presence is a fountain of health, and his protection a *wall of fire*. He has betrothed her, in eternal covenant, to himself.

Her living Head, in whom she lives, is above, and his quickening Spirit shall never depart from her. Armed with divine virtue, his gospel, secret, silent, unobserved, enters the hearts of men and sets up an everlasting kingdom. It eludes all the vigilance, and baffles all the power, of the adversary. Bars, and bolts, and dungeons are no obstacle to its approach: Bonds, and tortures, and death cannot extinguish its influence. Let no man's heart tremble then, because of fear. Let no man despair, in these days of rebuke and blasphemy, of the Christian cause. The ark is launched, indeed, upon the floods; the tempest sweeps along the deep; the billows break over her on every side. But Jehovah-Jesus has promised to conduct her in safety to the haven of peace. She cannot be lost unless the pilot perish. Why then do the heathen rage, and the people *imagine a vain thing?* Hear, O Zion, the word of thy God, and rejoice for the consolation. *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.*

Mere preservation, however, though a most comfortable, is not the only hope of the church; she has

(2.) The prospect of *increase.*

Increase—from an effectual blessing upon the means of grace in places where they are already enjoyed: for thus saith the Lord, *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.*

Increase—from the diffusion of evangelical truth through pagan lands. *For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*

Increase—from the recovery of the rejected Jews to the faith and privileges of God's dear children. *Blindness in part has happened unto Israel*—they have been cut off, for their unbelief, from the olive-tree. Age has followed age,

and they remain to this hour, spread over the face of the earth, a fearful and affecting testimony to the truth of God's word. They are without their sanctuary, without their Messiah, without the hope of their believing ancestors. But it shall not be always thus. They are still *beloved for the fathers' sake.* When the *fullness of the Gentiles shall come in*, they too shall be gathered. They shall discover, in our Jesus, the marks of the promised Messiah; and with tenderness proportioned to their former insensibility, shall cling to his cross. Grafted again into their own olive-tree, *all Israel shall be saved.* It was *through their fall that salvation came unto us Gentiles.* And, *if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?* What ecstasy, my brethren! the Gentile and the Jew taking *sweet counsel together, and going to the house of God in company!* the path of the swift messenger of grace marked, in every direction, by the *fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ—a nation born at once*—the children of Zion exclaiming, *The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.* The knowledge of Jehovah overspreading the earth *as the waters cover the sea;* and all flesh enjoying the salvation of God!

This faith ushers in a

(3.) Prospect of the Church—the prospect of *triumph.*

Though often desolate, and *afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted,* the Lord her God will then *make her an eternal excellency,* and repay her sorrows with triumph—

Triumph—in complete victory over the enemies who sought her hurt. *The nation and kingdom,* saith the Lord, *that will not serve thee shall perish; yea those nations shall be utterly wasted.—The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.* That great enemy of her purity and her peace, who shed the blood of her saints and her prophets, the MAN OF SIN *who has exalted himself above all that is called God,* shall appear, in the whole horror of his doom as the *son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.* The terrible but joyous event shall be announced by an angel from heaven *crying mightily with a strong voice, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!* ALLELUIA, shall be the response of the church universal, *Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments;*

for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand! Then too, *the accuser of the brethren—that old serpent which is the devil*, shall be cast down, *and bound a thousand years that he shall deceive the nations no more.*—This will introduce the church's

Triumph—in the prevalence of righteousness and peace throughout the world.

Her people shall be all righteous. The voice of the blasphemer shall no longer insult her ear. Iniquity as ashamed shall stop its mouth, and hide its head. *All her officers shall be peace, and all her exactors, righteousness. The kings of the earth bringing their glory and honor unto her*, shall accomplish the gracious promise. *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness.* Her prince whose throne is forever and ever, *shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more!* Every man shall meet, in every other man, a brother without dissimulation. Fear and the sword shall be far away, *they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid.*

For thus saith the Lord, *Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls, Salvation, and thy gates, Praise.*

Triumph—in the presence of God, in the communion of his love, and the signal manifestation of his glory. *Behold, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.* Then shall be seen, *the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God,* which *shall have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it,—and they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it; and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

Such, according to the sure word of prophecy, will be the triumphs of Christianity; and to this issue all scriptural efforts to evangelize the heathen contribute their share. That mind is profane, indeed, which repels the sentiment of awe; and hard is the heart which feels no bland emotion—But let us pause—You exult, perhaps, in the view of that happiness which is re-

served for the human race; you long for its arrival; and are eager, in your place, to help on the gracious work. It is well. But are there no heathen in this assembly? Are there none who, in the midst of their zeal for foreign missions, forget their own souls; nor consider that they themselves *neglect the great salvation?* Remember, my brethren, that a man may be active in measures which shall subserve the conversion of others, and yet perish in his own iniquity. That very gospel which you desire to send to the heathen, must be the gospel of *your* salvation; it must turn *you from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God;* it must make *you meet for the inheritance of the saints,* or it shall fearfully aggravate your condemnation at last. You pray, *Thy kingdom come.* But is the *kingdom of God within you?* Is the Lord Jesus *in you, the hope of glory?* Be not deceived. The *name* of Christian will not save you. Better had it been for you *not to have known the way of righteousness*—better to have been the most idolatrous pagan—better, infinitely better, not to have been born, than to die strangers to the pardon of the Redeemer's blood, and the sanctifying virtue of his Spirit. From his throne on high he calls; calls, my brethren, to you; *Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else. Seek ye the Lord*

while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

On the other hand, such as have *fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them*, are commanded to be *joyful in their King*. He reigns, O believer, for thee. The stability of his throne is thy safety. The administration of his government is for thy good; and the precious pledge that he *will perfect that which concerneth thee*. In all thy troubles and in all thy joy *commit thy way unto him*. He will guard the sacred deposit. Fear not that thou shalt *lack any good thing*—Fear not that thou shalt be forsaken—Fear not that thou shalt fall beneath the *arm of the oppressor*. "He went through the fires of the pit to *save* thee; and he will stake all the glories of his crown to *keep* thee." Sing, then, thou beloved, *Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.*

And if we have *tasted that he is gracious:* if we look back with horror and transport upon the wretchedness and the wrath which we have escaped, with what anxiety shall we not hasten

to the aid of our fellow-men, who are *sitting in the region and shadow of death.* What zeal will be too ardent; what labor too persevering; what sacrifice too costly, if, by any means, we may tell them of Jesus, and the resurrection, and the life eternal! Who shall be daunted by difficulties, or deterred by discouragement? If but one pagan should be brought, savingly, by your instrumentality, to the knowledge of God, and the kingdom of heaven, will you not, my brethren, have an ample recompense? Is there here a man who would give up all for lost because some favorite hope has been disappointed? or who regrets the worldly substance which he has expended on so divine an enterprise? Shame on thy coward spirit and thine avaricious heart! Do the holy scriptures, does the experience of ages, does the nature of things, justify the expectation, that we shall carry war into the central regions of delusion and crime, without opposition, without trial? Show me a plan which encounters not fierce resistance from the prince of darkness and his allies in the human heart, and I will show you a plan which never came from the inspiration of God. If missionary effort suffer occasional embarrassment: if impressions on the heathen be less speedy, and powerful, and extensive, than fond wishes have anticipated: if particular parts of the great system of

operation be, at times, disconcerted: if any of the *ministers of grace* fall a sacrifice to the violence of those whom they go to bless *in the name of the Lord;* these are events which ought to exercise our faith and patience; to wean us from self-sufficiency; to teach us where our strength lies, and where our dependence must be fixed; but not to enfeeble hope, nor relax diligence. Let us not *despise the day of small things.* Let us not overlook, as an unimportant matter, the *very existence* of that missionary spirit which has already awakened Christians in different countries from their long and dishonorable slumbers, and bids fair to produce, in due season, *a general movement of the church upon earth.* Let us not, for one instant, harbor the ungracious thought, that the prayers, and tears, and wrestlings of those who *make mention of the Lord*, form no link in that vast chain of events by which he *will establish, and will make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* That dispensation which of all others is most repulsive to *flesh and blood*, the violent death of faithful missionaries, should animate Christians with new resolution. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.* The cry of martyred blood ascends the heavens; it enters into *the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.* It will give

him no rest till he *rain down righteousness* upon the land where it has been shed, and which it has sealed as a future conquest for him who *in his majesty rides prosperously because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness.*

For the world, indeed, and perhaps for the church, many calamities and trials are in store, before the glory of the Lord shall be so revealed, that *all flesh shall see it together. I will shake all nations*, is the divine declaration, *I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come.* The vials of wrath which are now running, and others which remain to be poured out, must be exhausted. The *supper of the great God* must be prepared, and his *strange work* have its course. Yet the missionary cause must ultimately succeed. It is the cause of God, and *shall* prevail. The days, O brethren, roll rapidly on, when the shout of the isles shall swell the thunder of the Continent: when the Thames and the Danube, when the Tiber and the Rhine, shall call upon Euphrates, the Ganges, and the Nile; and the loud concert shall be joined by the Hudson, the Missisippi, and the Amazon, singing with one heart and one voice, Alleluia! Salvation! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

Comfort one another with this faith, and with these words:

Now, *Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever:* LET THE WHOLE EARTH BE FILLED WITH HIS GLORY! *Amen and Amen!*

CHRISTIAN MOURNING.

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE

DEATH OF MRS. ISABELLA GRAHAM;

AND PREACHED ON THE

EVENING OF SABBATH, AUG. 14, 1814.

"A gracious woman retaineth honor."—Prov. xi. 16.

SERMON VIII.

CHRISTIAN MOURNING.

1 THESS. IV. 13, 14.

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

CHRISTIANITY founds her claim to general reception upon doctrines most abasing to human pride, and facts calculated rather to repel than to invite human credulity. Her cardinal *doctrine*, which all the rest subserve, is the justification of a sinner, his deliverance from the bondage of his sin, and perfect happiness in heaven, through faith in a Savior who himself fell a victim to his enemies, and expired, as a malefac-

tor, under the infamy of the cross. Nothing more repugnant to their preconceived notions was ever proclaimed in the ears of men. It is the object of their dislike, their derision, and their scorn. *We preach*, says the apostle, *we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness!*" So it was at the beginning; so it is at the present hour; and so it will remain to the end.

The cardinal *fact* of Christianity, without which all her other facts lose their importance, is the resurrection from the dead of this same crucified Savior, as the prelude, the pattern, and the pledge of the resurrection of his followers to eternal life. Against this great fact the *children of disobedience*, from the Pharisees of Jerusalem down to the scoffers of New York, have leveled their batteries. One assails its proof; another, its reasonableness; all, its truth. When Paul asserted it before an audience of Athenian philosophers, *some mocked*—a short method of refuting the gospel; and likely, from its convenience, to continue in favor and in fashion.

Yet with such doctrines and facts did the religion of Jesus make her way through the world. Against the superstition of the multitude—against the interest, influence, and craft of their priesthood—against the ridicule of wits, the reasoning of sages, the policy of cabinets, and

the prowess of armies—against the axe, the cross, and the stake, she extended her conquests from Jordan to the Thames. She gathered her laurels alike upon the snows of Scythia, the green fields of Europe, and the sands of Africa. The altars of impiety crumbled before her march —the glimmer of the schools disappeared in her light—Power felt his arm wither at her glance; and, in a short time, she who went, forlorn and insulted, from the hill of Calvary to the tomb of Joseph, ascended the imperial throne, and waved her banner over the palace of the Cæsars. Her victories were not less benign than decisive. They were victories over all that pollutes, degrades, and ruins man; in behalf of all that purifies, exalts, and saves him. They subdued his understanding to truth, his habits to rectitude, his heart to happiness. In an appeal to that of which they were unexceptionable judges, their own experience, Paul thus exclaims to the believers of Thessalonica: *They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

The change from pagan to Christian character; from midnight *darkness* to *light in the Lord*, was abundantly visible, and not to be explained

but upon the principles of Christianity itself. Yet, without detracting from its magnitude, or from the glory of those divine influences which produced it, we may be allowed to question whether we are not prone to look upon the primitive converts as having reached an eminence in knowledge and purity, consistent, under their circumstances, neither with the general laws of our nature, nor with the testimony of holy writ. Falling far short of them in zeal, in love, in promptitude of action, in patience of suffering, we regard them as a sort of human angels with whom we may not venture to claim connection. But when emotion yields to thought, and reason balances facts, we recover from the fond illusion. We see them to have been *men of like passions* with ourselves; subject to erroneous conceptions, to rash judgments, to groundless fears, to irregular conduct. Let the Thessalonian Christians be our example. Collected from Jews and Gentiles, they could not rid themselves, at once, of their old prepossessions. Now and then, the Jewish tradition or the pagan feeling would obtrude into the sanctuary of their *consolation in Christ.* Some of them, led by a then popular opinion, that their Lord was shortly to appear, and tinctured with the doctrine of the Rabbins, mourned over the supposed diminution of happiness to their friends who had died without be-

holding the glorious advent of the Messiah's reign. Others, through the recurrence of early impressions, the objections of their heathen neighbors, and, it may be, the assiduities of false teachers, seem to have been drawn into doubts concerning the resurrection itself, and, of course, the safety of their friends who had died in faith. The native tendency of such apprehensions was to weigh down their spirits; to check their ardor; to shake their constancy under persecution; and to make them, instead of being *faithful unto the death*, begin to think themselves *of all men the most miserable*.

To rectify their mistake and establish them under their trial, is the design of the text. And although it was originally addressed to the Thessalonians; yet it is the common property of Christians; and was *written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope*. Let us, then, ponder its import. In general it contains an affectionate *counsel*, with the *reasons* thereof, against depression of heart at the death of believing friends.

I. The counsel of the text is, so to cherish the knowledge of the gospel, as that our hearts shall not be depressed by the death of believers; but that there shall be an immeasurable distance between our grief and the grief of unbelievers. *I would not*, says Paul, *have you to be ignorant*,

brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.

That we may have a correct view of the importance of this counsel, let us briefly develop its leading principle.

Death is, in itself, a most serious and distressful event. It is nature's supreme evil—the abhorrence of God's creation—a monster from whose touch and sight every living thing recoils. So that to shrink from its ravages upon ourselves or upon those whom we love, is not an argument of weakness, but an act of obedience to the first law of being—a tribute to the value of that life which is our Maker's gift.

The disregard which some of old affected to whatever goes by the name of evil; the insensibility of others who yield up their souls to the power of fatalism; and the artificial gayety which has, occasionally, played the comedian about the dying bed of "philosophy, falsely so called," are outrages upon decency and nature. Death destroys both action and enjoyment—mocks at wisdom, strength, and beauty—disarranges our plans—robs us of our treasures—desolates our bosoms—breaks our heart-strings—blasts our hope. Death extinguishes the glow of kindness—abolishes the most tender relations of man—severs him from all that he knows and loves—subjects him to an ordeal which thou-

sands of millions have passed, but none can explain; and which will be as new to the last who gives up the ghost, as it was to murdered Abel—flings him, in fine, without any avail from the experience of others, into a state of untried being. No wonder that nature trembles before it. Reason justifies the fear. Religion never makes light of it: and he who does, instead of ranking with heroes, can hardly deserve to rank with a brute.

Yet it is not the amount of actual suffering inflicted by the loss of those who are dear to us as our own souls that constitutes the chief pain of the privation. Death might *come up into our windows;* might rend from our embraces, and bear away, amidst our unavailing lamentations, all that our tenderest affections cling to here below; and the stroke would fall with comparative lightness, were its effect but temporary. It is from futurity that Grief, like Consolation, derives her power. The tears of separation will the more easily dry up, and be succeeded by the calm of cheerfulness, when we expect to regain what we have lost. But when there is no such expectation; when the treasure ravished from us can neither be restored nor replaced; it is then that nature sickens, and joy descends to the tomb. Ah! who can paint the anguish of the *last* look! Who can endure, at

parting, the distractions of that word, *forever!* Who, that has any thought of hereafter—that but inclines to the belief that man dieth not as a beast dieth, can sustain the rackings of wild uncertainty, unable to surmise whither the beloved one is gone, and to what condition of being?

This was the state of the poor pagans; *others the rest*, *those that are without*, as the apostle terms them. In the death of their friends they had no hope. Not that they were altogether without the notion of the existence of a soul detached from its body, or of happiness in a life to come. Tradition, fortified by the yearnings of nature, had preserved among the vulgar, the poets, and a few sober philosophers, something of distant kin to the truth. But all their conceptions were so obscure, so unwarranted, and therefore so unsatisfying, that they were rather the confused images of a dream, than the clear representations of waking vision. They were sufficient to agitate, without convincing—they possessed the torments of anxiety, without the possibility of certainty: and the hope which they fostered, was, for every purpose of consolation and peace, no hope at all.

1. They *knew* nothing, whatever they might conjecture, of the state of departed man. Whether his soul, his vital and rational principle, survives the body—whether it remains conscious

after death—whether, if conscious, it possesses any power of retrospect over earthly scenes—whether it is immortal—whether it enters, in its new mode of being, upon a fixed state of sorrow or joy, of shame or honor.—On all these points the heathen were ignorant; although many of them were not quite so unconcerned as numbers who enjoy the pure light of the gospel, and boast of their liberal attainments; but with whom, in that great and terrible day of the Lord, the worst of the pagans would be unwilling to change places.

2. With the resurrection of the body the heathen were absolutely unacquainted. Flesh and blood could not reveal it to them. There are sighings, misgivings, reverential feelings towards the dead, analogies of nature, which eagerly fall in with the doctrine of the resurrection once made known: but which could never lead to the discovery, or even suspicion, of its truth. The apostles who taught it, until God opened the eyes of their hearers, were regarded as fanatics. In respect to the *body*, therefore, Death brought with him into every pagan house, dejection, horror, black despondence.

Under these circumstances, what shall arrest the current of *mourning, and lamentation, and wo?* Where is the voice of the comforter? or what bosom can find room for comfort, which

affords no entrance to hope? Oh! it is despair that kills!

Such was paganism bending over the remains of a deceased friend. Such, too, was Judaism, after it had rejected *the Hope of Israel, and the Savior thereof.* Such are still the millions, whether of Gentiles or Jews, who know not God.

And wherein have unbelievers among ourselves the pre-eminence? What have *they* to gild their evening hour, to bind up their aching head, to soothe their laboring heart? What living hope descends from heaven to smile on the sinking features, whisper peace to the retiring spirit, and announce to the sad surrounding relatives that all is well? There is none! Astonishment, dismay, melancholy boding, are the *portion of their cup.* Sit down, ye unhappy, in the desolation of grief. Consolation heard the voice of your weeping: she hastened to your door, but started back affrighted; her commission extends not to *your* house of mourning; ye have no hope!

But, Christians, believers in the Lord Jesus, *your* condition is widely different, and so must be your carriage. You, too, must resign, many of you have already resigned, some of you very recently, your believing friends to the stroke of death. You must feel, have felt, the pang of

separation. You are not forbidden to mourn. The smitten heart will bleed; the workings of nature must have vent. It is right. Tears were not made that they should never be shed; nor the passion of grief implanted only to be stifled. God's gifts to us in the persons of those whom he animates with his love, beautifies with his image, and honors with his communion, are too precious to be relinquished without emotion. It would be a strange way of glorifying him for the best of his earthly blessings, to behave, when they are removed, as if they were not worth one thought. Nor could there be a fouler stain upon the religion of the cross, than a tendency to extinguish affections calculated, in a peculiar manner, to lessen the evils of our miserable world. No! the *grace which bringeth salvation* does not destroy, but restore, the man. All that belongs to him, excepting sin and its effects she acknowledges, regulates, exalts. Jesus, the perfection of moral beauty, Jesus himself wept at the tomb of his friend. He has dignified as well as vindicated, by his example, the most sacred of our social feelings. And if we, sharing his sympathy, weep at the tomb of those who are not less his friends than our own, instead of falling beneath the level of profane fortitude, we rise up to the grandeur of fellowship with the *Man of sorrows.*

Settle it, therefore, Christian brethren, as a principle not to be shaken, that your religion disclaims alike all kindred with apathy and with frenzy. Mourn you may when the *desire of your eyes* goes down to the dust; but you must not mourn as those *who have no hope.* For hope, even the sweetest hope that can lodge in the human breast, is yours. Let your mourning, therefore, be tempered, submissive, holy. Yield not to brooding sadness. Transfer your tears from the cold face of your friend to the feet of your Master, and there compose your souls to serenity and peace. This is evangelical counsel; the counsel of my text. On what grounds it is offered; the reason why it should have a complete ascendancy over our minds, is the

II. part of discourse.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

The grounds of our consolation with respect to departed saints are, the nature of their death —their condition in and after it—and the prospect of their glorious resurrection.

1. The very nature of death, as it comes to believers, is a source of satisfaction; an antidote to excessive sorrow. They *sleep.*

Not that we are to imagine, with some dreaming speculatists, that the souls of the righteous

remain unconscious and torpid during the period which elapses between the death and resurrection of their bodies. This cheerless doctrine, desirable to those only whose hearts have never been warmed by the love of Christ, was far enough from the faith and the theology of Paul. He had no cause to congratulate the church, as he does in the twelfth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, on her coming *to the spirits of just men made perfect*, if, instead of *beholding the face of God in light and glory*, they are inert and insensible as a clod. Nor could he who longed to *depart and be with Christ*, accounting it the same thing to be *absent from the body*, and *to be present with the Lord*, suppose that all his faculties and affections were to be suspended; and all his opportunities of serving his adorable Redeemer to be taken away, by death, for scores of centuries together. The Lord have mercy upon them for whom such a prospect has any charms!

The apostle's words have quite another sound in the ears of faith—they are fraught with consolation fragrant as the breath of the morning, refreshing as the dews of heaven. It is true—a delightful truth—that the bodies of the saved, which at death their souls leave in order to be with Jesus, do rest in their graves. But it is chiefly in reference to their happy decease—their safe and comfortable departure, combined as it

is with the death of the body, that the scriptures say, they *sleep*. Blessed assurance! Hear its admonitions.

1st. Death brings no *peril* to a child of God; and ought to be no more an object of his fear than the approach of sleep at the close of day. I speak not of the physical pangs of dying, which relate to our animal perceptions, and to which our animal part never can nor should be reconciled. I speak of death as affecting our *moral* being. In this view he is rightly named the "*king of terrors;*" because, to ungodly men he is the *wages of sin*. It is from guilt that he draws his terrifying power. He announces to the wicked the end of their respit; the filling up of their cup; *a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries;* and if they be not alarmed, if their faces gather not blackness, and their bosoms horror, it is because they are *hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*. Their stupidity will only heighten the surprise and consternation of the eternal world. But Jesus, having delivered his people from the wrath to come, delivered them by the blood of his cross, has for them stripped death of his terrors, and given them authority to cry, as he hands them over the threshold of life, *O Death, where is thy sting? the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;*

but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! In such a case death deserves not the name. It is but a sleep; sleep in its most heavenly form; sleep in Jesus.

2d. Death is to believers a *cessation from their toils and griefs*, even as sleep is a repose from fatigue.

We who are in this tabernacle do groan; while the day lasts we must bear its burden and its heat. I shall not dwell upon the pains and endurances of a Christian soldier—his fight of faith—his race for the prize—his conflict with flesh and blood; and what is more, with principalities and powers—his weakness, his weariness, his wounds, his faintings, his falls, his recoveries; in a word, his many and great vicissitudes. The point before us is, the *end*—it is peace. So saith the word of our God: *He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds; each one that walketh in his uprightness.* To others, death is, emphatically, the beginning of sorrows—to a Christian, the termination. Grief and he have parted. The hour of release is come. He bids adieu to the field of battle. He puts off his harness; and *knowing that his labor shall not be in vain*, he lays his head on the bosom of the Captain of his salvation, and goes quietly to sleep. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labors, and*

their works do follow them. Thus, in the nature of a believer's death there is ample reason why we should not be swallowed up of over much sorrow. He sleeps.

2. His condition in and after death is another spring of our consolation. He sleeps *in Jesus.* Here we ascertain two momentous truths.

1st. Death, which dissolves every other tie, touches not our union with the Lord Christ. Even then his saints are in him: as much the *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,* as when they were serving him in their mortal life. Seest thou that breathless corse? It was but a moment ago, the abode of a spirit now glorified with Christ. It was also an abode of the Divine Spirit. *Know ye not,* saith Paul, *that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?* The human spirit is fled: but shall death, suppose ye, expel the Spirit of God from his own temple? No, he still resides in it, and will keep it for himself. Change it shall. The process of taking it down has already begun. It must descend to dust. It must see corruption. But, notwithstanding, it is the Savior's property; a part of that whole person which is inseparably one with him. It is an object of his care and love. He does not scruple to call the church's dead *his* own body. This makes their dust precious: and that which he values shall not be worthless in our eyes.

2d. From their sleeping *in Jesus*, we ascertain that all the rights and privileges which belong to believers in virtue of their union with him, remain to them, after death, undiminished and unimpaired. Dead they are, but they are dead in Christ. They are as much comprehended in his covenant; summed up in him as their head; represented by him as their advocate who has all their claims in his hand for their benefit, as they possibly could be, when, here on earth, they lived by faith, walked by faith, suffered in faith, drew near to God by faith in his blood. Whatever is meant by being in Christ, is meant of them now they are dead; and shall be made good to them at his appearing. They *sleep in Jesus.*

3d. We derive consolation under the death of Christian friends from the prospect of their *glorious resurrection. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

Whatever have been the disputes about other doctrines of Christianity, no man can deny that it teaches the resurrection of the body. The very gates of hell, in the shape of that unhallowed philosophy which fritters away its most precious truths into eastern metaphors and Jewish allegories, have not ventured to tamper with the faith of the resurrection. This stands con-

fest a Christian peculiarity. Let us contemplate its nature and proof as displayed in the text.

1st. This clay which we commit to the grave, under that universal sentence, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return*, will be quickened again, and reassume, even after the slumber of ages, the organization, the lineaments, the expression, of that self-same human being with whom we were conversant upon earth. Otherwise it were a new creation, and not a resurrection; and will be reanimated by that self-same spirit which forsook it at death; otherwise it were a different being altogether, and not the one with whom, under that form, we held sweet communion in this life; and walked to the house of God in company. It has, indeed, been questioned whether Christian friends shall know each other in the world of the risen. But why not? Did not the disciples know the Lord Jesus after his resurrection? Did they not know him at the moment of his ascension? Shall the body which he wore upon earth be the only one recognized in heaven? If Peter and Paul, if James and John shall not be able to distinguish each other, upon what principle shall they be able to distinguish their Lord? And why should the body be raised at all, if the associations with which its reappearance is connected are to be broken and lost? It cannot be—But then,

2d. The body will be raised under circumstances, and with properties suited to the new state of being and action on which the saints shall enter. God shall bring them with the Lord Christ.

They shall be found in Christ's *train*. He will set them on his right hand in the face of heaven. He will present them to his Father, as the *sons whom he was appointed to bring unto glory*, saying, *Here am I and the children whom thou hast given me.*

They shall be adorned with Christ's *likeness*. *Beloved! it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* The change requisite for this exaltation shall pass upon their body without destroying its sameness—as *flesh and blood, it cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* But every obstacle shall be surmounted. If *it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption*—if *it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory*—if *it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power*—if *it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*—fit for the occupations and enjoyments of the heavenly world.

Finally, believers, in their raised bodies, shall be *partakers of Christ's glory* in the judgment of the quick and dead—

Know ye not that *the saints shall judge the world? shall judge angels?* They *overcame by the blood of the Lamb,* and *shall sit down with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne.*

But how are these transformations to be effected? How? By that same *power* which *calleth things that be not as though they were.* God shall bring his risen ones with Jesus Christ. This is our short answer. I cannot open my ears to the objections of unbelief. We are upon too high ground to stoop to the caviler who marshals his ignorance and imbecility against the knowledge and might of God. Let him puzzle himself with his theories about personal identity—Let him talk about one part of the body interred in Asia, another in Africa, and a third in Europe—Let him ask as many questions as he can devise about limbs devoured by ravenous animals, and become, by nutrition, part of their bodies; which bodies again have passed, by the same process, into the flesh of other animals; and these, in their turn, consumed by man, and incorporated with the substance of a new human body—Let him ask such questions, and ten thousand like them. Has he done? *Dost thou not therefore err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God?* It will be time enough to plead thy difficulties when God shall commit to

thee the raising of the dead. For us it is sufficient that he who rears up the the living blade from the rotted grain, will be at no loss to rear up an incorruptible from a corrupted body, through what forms and varieties soever it may have passed.

The main question, however, is not what Omnipotence *can* but what it *will* perform.—*That God should raise the dead*, if so it please him, will not appear *incredible* to any sober man. But what proof have we that our faith on this head is not fancy; and that our hope shall not perish? The best of all possible proof.

We have, in the first place, the divine promise. God has engaged to *raise his people up by Jesus, and to present them together with him.* Jesus himself has said, *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth on me shall never die.* A thousand scientific demonstrations are not equivalent, as the ground of our confidence, to one word of Him *who cannot lie.* And so we shall find it in our last extremity.

We have, moreover, the accomplishment, in part, of the promise already. For there are upon the sacred record many instances of resurrection from the dead.

We have, as a sure pledge of its full accomplishment in due season, the resurrection of our

Lord Jesus himself. The fact is indisputable, and its consolation full.

(1) By his resurrection he VANQUISHED Death. He took away whatever gave to Death not only his sting but his empire. Therefore, saith the scripture, he ABOLISHED *Death; and brought* LIFE AND IMMORTALITY *to light through the gospel.*

(2) As the Lord Jesus died, so he rose again, the head and representative of his redeemed. He bought them unto God by his blood; and he came back from the grave to show that the ransom was accepted, and to prosecute the claim which he presented to the throne of God, as he was about offering his soul in their souls' stead —*Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.* His resurrection, therefore, is a pledge from the living God to his church, to the universe, that all who die in faith shall rise in glory. Christ is the *first fruits*—His people, the harvest that shall follow—*But every one in his own order, Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming.* For this hour of joy and triumph is reserved the fulfillment of his gracious promise—*Thy dead shall live—my dead body shall they arise.* He owns them as his body even in their state of death; They shall hear his voice, *Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust!* They shall answer him from

their graves, and shall come forth, the sons and daughters of immortality; resplendent in beauty, worthy of his kingdom. For he shall *change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* This is *Christian* consolation; this is *Christian* hope; hope which all the crowns and treasures of earth are infinitely too poor to purchase or to balance. And it is hope that maketh not ashamed. *For I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

In this faith the apostles labored, and the martyrs bled. Ages have elapsed and it is still the same. It is not a distant wonder; not a brilliant vision; but a solid and present reality under the power of which at this moment, while the words are on my lips, Christians, in various parts of the world, are closing their eyes to sleep in Jesus. It has come home to our own *business and bosoms.* It has chosen our houses to be the scene of its miracles. But rarely does it fall to the lot of human eyes to witness so high a display of its value and virtue, as was witnessed in that blessed woman whose entrance into the joy

of her Lord has occasioned our assembling this evening.

As we are commanded to be *followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*, we should have their example before us, that we may learn to imbibe their spirit, to imitate their graces, and be ready for their reward. With this view permit me to lay before you some brief recollections of our deceased friend.

It is not my intention to relate the history of her life. That will be a proper task for biography. I design merely to state a few leading facts, and to sketch such outlines of character, as may show to those who knew her not, *what manner of person she was in all holy conversation and godliness.* Those who knew her best require no such remembrancer; and will be able, from their own observation, to supply its defects.

Isabella Marshall, known to us as Mrs. Graham, received from nature, qualities which in circumstances favorable to their development, do not allow their possessor to pass through life unnoticed and inefficient.

An intellect strong, prompt, and inquisitive—a temper open, generous, cheerful, ardent—a heart replete with tenderness, and alive to every social affection, and every benevolent impulse—a spirit at once enterprising and persevering. The whole crowned with that rare and inesti-

mable endowment, good sense, were materials which required only skillful management to fit her for adorning and dignifying any female station. With that sort of cultivation which the world most admires, and those opportunities which attend upon rank and fortune, she might have shone in the circles of the great, without forfeiting the esteem of the good. Or had her lot fallen among the literary unbelievers of the continent, she might have figured in the sphere of the Voltaires, the Deffands, and the other *esprits forts* of Paris. She might have been as gay in public, as dismal in private, and as wretched in her end, as any the most distinguished among them for their wit and their wo. But God had destined her for other scenes and services—scenes from which greatness turns away appalled; and services which all the cohorts of infidel wit are unable to perform. She was to be prepared by poverty, bereavement, and grief, to pity and to succor the poor, the bereaved, and the grieving. The sorrows of widowhood were to teach her the heart of the widow—her babes, deprived of their father, to open the springs of her compassion to the fatherless and orphan—and the consolations of God, her *refuge and strength, her very present help in trouble*, to make her a daughter of consolation to them who were *walking in the valley of the shadow of death*.

To train her betimes for the future dispensations of his providence, the Lord touched the heart of this *chosen vessel* in her early youth. The spirit of prayer sanctified her infant lips; and taught her, as far back as her memory could go, to *pour out her heart* before God. She had not reached her eleventh year, when she selected a bush in the retirement of the field, and there devoted herself to her God by faith in the Redeemer. The incidents of her education, thoughtless companions, the love of dress, and the dancing-school, as she has herself recorded, chilled for a while the warmth of her piety, and robbed her bosom of its peace. But her gracious Lord revisited her with his mercy, and bound her to himself in an everlasting covenant which she sealed at his own table about the 17th year of her age. Having married, a few years after, Dr. John Graham, surgeon to the 60th British regiment, she accompanied him first to Montreal, and shortly after to Fort Niagara. Here, during four years of temporal prosperity, she had no opportunity, even for once, of entering *the habitation of God's house*, or hearing the sound of his gospel. Secluded from the waters of the sanctuary, and all the public means of growth in grace, her religion began to languish, and its leaf to droop. But the root was perennial—it was of *the seed of God which liveth and*

abideth forever. The sabbath was still to her the sign of his covenant. On that day of rest, with her Bible in her hand, she used to wander through the woods, renew her self-dedication, and pour out her prayer for the salvation of her husband and her children. He who *dwelleth not in temples made with hands*, heard her cry from the wilds of Niagara, and *strengthened her with strength in her soul.*

By one of those vicissitudes which checker military life, the regiment was ordered to the island of Antigua in the West Indies. Here she met with that exquisite enjoyment to which she had been long a stranger—the communion of kindred spirits in the love of Christ: and soon did she need all the soothing and support which it is fitted to administer. For in a very short time the husband of her youth, the object of her most devoted affection, her sole earthly stay, was taken from her by death. The stroke was, indeed, mitigated by the sweet assurance that he slept in Jesus. But a heart like hers, convulsed by a review of the past and anticipation of the future, would have burst with agony, had she not known how to pour out its sorrows into the bosom of her heavenly Father. Trials which beat sense and reason to the ground, raise up the faith of the Christian, and draw her closer to her God. O how divine to have Him as the rock of our

rest when every earthly reliance is *a broken reed!*

Bowing to his mysterious dispensation, and committing herself to his protection as the *Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow*, she returns with her charge to her native land, to contract alliance with penury, and to live by faith for her daily bread. That same grace under whose teaching she *knew how to abound*, taught her also how *to suffer need.* With a dignity which belongs only to them who have treasure in heaven, she descended to her humble cot, employment, and fare. But her humility, according to the scripture, was the forerunner of her advancement. The light of her virtues shone brightest in her obscurity, and pointed her way to the confidential trust of forming the minds and manners of young females of different ranks in the metropolis of Scotland. Here, respected by the great and beloved by the good; in sacred intimacy with *devout and honorable women*, and the friendship of men who were in truth *servants of the most high God*, she continued in the successful discharge of her duties till Providence conducted her to our shores. She long had a predilection for America, as a land in which, according to her favorite opinion, the church of Christ is signally to flourish. Here she wished to end her days and leave her chil-

dren. And we shall remember, with gratitude, that in granting her wish, God cast her lot with ourselves. Twenty-five years ago she opened, in this city, a school for the education of young ladies, the benefits of which have been strongly felt, and will be long felt hereafter, in different and distant parts of our country. Evidently devoted to the welfare of her pupils—attentive to their peculiarities of character—happy in discovering the best avenue of approach to their minds—possessing, in a high degree, the talent of simplifying her instruction and varying its form, she succeeded in that most difficult part of a teacher's work, the inducing youth *to take an interest in their own improvement; and to educate themselves by exerting their own faculties.*

In governing her little empire, she acted upon those principles which are the basis of all good government on every scale and under every modification—to be *reasonable*, to be *firm*, and to be *uniform*. Her authority was both tempered and strengthened by condescension. It commanded respect while it conciliated affection. Her word was law, but it was the law of kindness. It spoke to the conscience, but it spoke to the heart; and obedience bowed with the knee of love. She did not, however, imagine her work to be perfected in fitting her

élévées for duties and elegance of life. Never did she forget their immortal nature. Utterly devoid of sectarian narrowness, she labored to infuse into their minds those vital principles of evangelical piety which form the common distinction of the disciples of Christ, the peculiar glory of the female name, and the surest pledge of domestic bliss. Her voice, her example, her prayers, concurred in recommending that pure and undefiled religion without which no human being shall see the Lord.—Shall we wonder that her scholars should be tenderly attached to such a preceptress? that they should leave her with their tears and their blessing? that they should carry an indelible remembrance of her into the bosom of their families? that the reverence of pupils should ripen with their years into the affection of friends? and that there should be among them, at this day, many a wife who is *a crown to her husband;* and many a mother who is a blessing to her children; and who owes, in a great degree, the felicity of her character to the impressions, the principles, and the habits which she received while under the maternal tuition of Mrs. Graham?

Admonished, at length, by the infirmities of age, and importuned by her friends, this venerable matron retired to private life. But it was impossible for her to be idle. Her leisure only

gave a new direction to her activity. With no less alacrity than she had displayed in the education of youth, did she now embark in the relief of misery. Her benevolence was unbounded, but it was discreet. There are charities which increase the wretchedness they are designed to diminish; which, from some fatal defect in their application, bribe to iniquity while they are relieving want; and make food, and raiment, and clothing, to warm into life the most poisonous seeds of vice. But the charities of our departed friend were of another order. They selected the fittest objects—the widow—the fatherless—the orphan—the untaught child—and the ignorant adult. They combined intellectual and moral benefit with the communication of physical comfort. In her house originated the *Society for the relief of Poor Widows with small Children*. Large, indeed, is this branch of the family of affliction; and largely did it share in her sympathy and succor. When at the head of the noble association just named, she made it her business to see with her own eyes the objects of their care; and to give, by her personal presence and efforts, the strongest impulse to their humane system. From morning till night has she gone from abode to abode of these destitute, who are too commonly unpitied by the great, despised by the proud, and forgotten by

the gay. She has gone to sit beside them on their humble seat, hearing their simple and sorrowful story—sharing their homely meal—ascertaining the condition of their children—stirring them up to diligence, to economy, to neatness, to order—putting them into the way of obtaining suitable employment for themselves, and suitable places for their children—distributing among them the word of God, and little tracts calculated to familiarize its first principles to their understanding—cherishing them in sickness—admonishing them in health—instructing, reproving, exhorting, consoling—sanctifying the whole with fervent prayer. Many a sobbing heart and streaming eye is this evening embalming her memory in the house of the widow.

Little, if any, less is the debt due to her from that invaluable charity the *Orphan Asylum*. It speaks its own praise, and that praise is hers. Scores of orphans redeemed from filth, from ignorance, from wretchedness, from crime—clothed, fed, instructed—trained, in cleanliness, to habits of industry—early imbued with the knowledge and fear of God—gradually preparing for respectability, usefulness, and happiness—is a spectacle for angels. Their infantine gayety, their healthful sport, their cherub-faces, mark the contrast between their present and former condition; and recall, very tenderly, the scenes

in which they used to cluster round their patron-mother, hang on her gracious words, and receive her benediction.

Brethren, I am not dealing in romance, but in sober fact. The night would be too short for a full enumeration of her worthy deeds. Suffice it to say, that they ended but with her life. The sabbath previous to her last sickness occupied her with a recent institution—*A Sunday School for Ignorant Adults;* and the evening preceding the touch of death, found her at the side of a faithful domestic, administering consolation to his wounded spirit.

Such active benevolence could hardly be detected in company with a niggardly temper. Wishes which cost nothing; pity which expires on the lips *Be ye warmed and be ye clothed*, from a cold heart and an unyielding gripe, never imprinted their disgraceful brand upon Isabella Graham. What she urged upon others she exemplified in herself. She kept a purse for God. Here, in obedience to his command, she deposited *the first fruits of all her increase;* and they were sacred to his service, as, in his providence, he should call for them. No shuffling pretences, no pitiful evasions, when a fair demand was made upon the hallowed store; and no frigid affectation in determining the quality of the demand. A sense of duty was the prompter, candor the

interpreter, and good sense the judge. Her disbursements were proportioned to the value of the object; and were ready at a moment's warning, to the very last farthing.* How pungent a reproof to those ladies of opulence and fashion, who sacrifice so largely to their dissipation or their vanity, that they have nothing left for mouths without food, and limbs without raiment! How far does it throw back into the shade those men of prosperous enterprise and gilded state, who, in the hope of some additional lucre, have thousands and ten thousands at their beck; but who, when asked for decent contributions to what they themselves acknowledge to be all important, turn away with this hollow excuse, "I cannot afford it!" Above all, how should her example redden the faces of many who profess to belong to Christ; to have received gratuitously from him, what he procured for them at the expense of his own blood, *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;* and yet, in the midst of abundance which *he* has lavished upon them, when the question is about relieving his suffering members, or promoting the glory of his kingdom, are sour, reluctant, mean! Are *these*

* The author knew her, when in moderate circumstances, to give, unsolicited, *fifty pounds at once*, out of that sacred purse, to a single most worthy purpose.

the *Christians?* Can it be that they have committed their bodies, their souls, their eternal hope, to a Savior whose thousand promises on this very point of "*honoring* HIM *with their substance*," have less influence upon their hearts and their hands than the word of any honest man? Remember the deceased, and hang your heads—Remember her, and tremble—Remember her, and *bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*

In that charity also which far surpasses mere almsgiving, however liberal, the charity of the gospel, our friend was conspicuous. *The love of God shed abroad in her own heart by the Holy Ghost*, drew forth her love to his people wherever she found them. Assuredly she had in herself this witness of her having *passed from death unto life*, that she *loved the brethren.* The epistle written not with ink, *but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart: yet read and known of all men:* that is, the Christian temper manifested by a Christian conversation, was to her the best letter of recommendation. Unwavering in her own faith as to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, she could, nevertheless, extend *love without dissimulation*, and the very bowels of Christian fellowship, to others, who, whatever might be their mistakes, their infirmities, or their differences in smaller matters, agreed in the great

Christian essential of *acceptance in the Beloved.* Deeply did she deplore the conceit, the bigotry, and the bitterness of sect. O that her spirit were more prevalent in the churches! that we could labor to abase our *crown of pride;* to offer up, with one consent, upon the altar of evangelical charity, those petty jealousies, animosities, and strifes which are our common reproach; and walk together as children of the same Father, brethren of the same Redeemer, and heirs of the same salvation!

To these admirable traits of character were added great tenderness of conscience and a spirit of prayer. Her religion, not contented to *justify her before men,* habitually aimed at pleasing *God who looketh upon the heart.* It was not enough for her to persuade herself that a thing *might* be right. Before venturing upon it, she studied to reduce the question of right to a clear certainty. How cautious, and scrupulous, and jealous of herself she was in this matter, they best can tell who saw her in the shade of retirement as well as in the sunshine of public observation. Perhaps it is not going too far to say, that her least guarded moments would, in others, have been marked for circumspection. At the same time her vigilance had nothing austere, gloomy, constrained, or censorious: nothing to repress the cheerfulness of social intercourse; or

to excite in others, even the thoughtless, a dread of merciless criticism after they should retire. It was sanctified nature moving gracefully in its own element. And with respect to the character and feelings of her neighbors, she was too full of Christian kindness not to *keep her tongue from evil, and her lips from speaking guile.*

These virtues and graces were maintained and invigorated by her habit of prayer. With the *new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, she was intimately familiar. Thither the *Spirit of grace and supplication* daily conducted her—there taught her to *pray;* and in praying to *believe;* and in believing to have *fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* She knew her God as the God that heareth prayer; and could attest that *Blessed is she that believeth, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.*

Under such influence her course could not but be correct, and her steps well ordered. The *secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant—he will guide them in judgment.* Thus he did with his handmaid whom he hath called home. Wherever she was, and in whatever circumstances, she remembered the guide of her youth, who, according to his promise, *never left her nor forsook her;*

but continued his gracious presence with her when she was *old and gray-headed.*

You may perhaps imagine, that with such direction and support it was impossible she should see trouble. Nay, but *waters of a full cup were wrung out to her!* She often ate the bread of sorrow steeped in wormwood and gall. Her heavenly Father *showed her great and sore adversities; that he might try her as silver is tried, and bring her forth from the furnace purified seven times.* It was during these refining processes that she found the worth of being a Christian. Though her way was planted with thorns and watered with her tears, yet the candle of the Lord shone upon her head; and from step to step she had reason to cry, *Hitherto hath Jehovah helped!* In a word, like Enoch, she walked with God—like Abraham, she staggered not at his promise through unbelief—like Jacob, she wrestled with the angel and prevailed—like Moses, endured as seeing him who is invisible—like Paul, finished her course with joy. Blessed were the eyes of the preacher, for they saw the victory of her faith; and his ears, for they heard her song of salvation. "You can say with the apostle, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have commited unto him?*" "O yes! but I cannot say the other, *I have fought a good fight*—I must

say, *I have fought a poor fight, I have run a poor race;* but *Christ fought for me—Christ ran with me—and through Christ I hope to win.*" "But you have no fear, no doubts, about your going to be with Christ?" "Oh no! not a doubt; I am as sure of that as if I were already in my Savior's arms." It was her final conversation with children of the dust. The next day, *when her flesh and her heart had so far failed* that she was incapable of uttering a sentence, she still proved her God to be the *strength of her heart;* and knew him to be *her portion forever.*—I said to her, *It is peace.* She opened her eyes, smiled, closed them again, bowed her dying head, and breathed out, *Peace.* It was her last word on on this side heaven. The attending spirits caught it from her lips; and brought to her the next day permission to sleep in Jesus.

From this review allow me, brethren, to urge the *value of private exertions in promoting general good.*

In pursuing his *gratifications,* man is apt to look upon himself as a being of great importance: In fulfilling his *duties,* to account himself as nothing. Both are extravagances which it will be his wisdom and happiness to correct. He is neither supreme in worth, nor useless in action. Let him not say, "I am but one: my voice will be drowned in the universal din: my

weight is lighter than a feather in the public scale. It is better for me to mind my own affairs, and leave these higher attempts to more competent hands." This is the language, not of reason and modesty, but of sloth, of selfishness, and of pride. The amount of it is, "I cannot do every thing, therefore I will do nothing"—But you can do much. Act well *your* part according to your faculties, your station, and your means.—The result will be honorable to yourself, delightful to your friends, and beneficial to the world. I advise not to gigantic aims, to enormous enterprise. The world has seen but one NEWTON and one HOWARD. Nothing is required of you but to make the most of the opportunities within your reach. Recall the example of MRS. GRAHAM. Here was a woman—a widow—a stranger in a strange land—without fortune—with no friends but such as her letters of introduction and her worth should acquire—and with a family of daughters dependent upon her for their subsistence. Surely if any one has a clear title of immunity from the obligation to carry her cares beyond the domestic circle, it is this widow; it is this stranger. Yet within a few years this stranger, this widow, with no means but her excellent sense, her benevolent heart, and her *persevering will* to do good, awakens the charities of a populous city, and gives to them an impulse, a direc-

tion, and an efficacy, unknown before! What might not be done by *men;* by men of talent, of standing, of wealth, of leisure? How speedily, under their well-directed beneficence, might a whole country change its physical, intellectual, and moral aspect; and assume, comparatively speaking, the face of another Eden—a second garden of God? Why then do they not diffuse, thus extensively, the seeds of knowledge, of virtue, and of bliss? I ask not for their pretenses; they are as old as the lust of lucre; and are refuted by the example which we have been contemplating—I ask for the true reason, for the inspiring principle, of their conduct. It is this—let them look to it when God shall call them to account for the abuse of their time, their talents, their station, their *unrighteous mammon.*—It is this: They believe not *the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.* They labor under no want but one—they want *the heart!* The bountiful God add this to the other gifts which he has bestowed upon them! I turn to the other sex.

That venerable mother in Israel, who has exchanged the service of God on earth for his service in heaven, has left a legacy to her sisters—she has left the example of her faith and patience; she has left her prayers; she has left the monument of her Christian deeds: and by these

she *being dead yet speaketh.* Matrons! has she left her *mantle* also? Are there none among you to hear her voice from the tomb, *Go and do thou likewise?* None whom affluence permits, endowments qualify, and piety prompts, to aim at her distinction by treading in her steps? Maidens? Are there none among *you*, who would wish to array yourselves hereafter in the honors of this *virtuous woman* Your hearts have dismissed their wonted warmth and generosity, if they do not throb as the reverend vision rises before you—Then prepare yourselves now, by seeking and serving the God of her youth, You cannot be too early *adorned with the robes of righteousness and the garments of salvation* in which she was wedded, in her morning of life, to Jesus the King of glory. That same grace which threw its radiance around her shall make you also to shine in the *beauty of holiness;* and the fragrance of those virtues which it shall create, develop, and ennoble, will be *as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.*

Yea, let me press upon all who hear me this evening, the transcendent excellence of Christian character, and the victorious power of Christian hope. The former bears the image of God; the latter is as imperishable as his throne. We fasten our eyes with more real respect, and more heart-felt approbation upon the moral

majesty displayed in *walking as Christ also walked*, than upon all the pomps of the monarch, or decorations of the military hero. More touching to the sense, and more grateful to high heaven, is the soft melancholy with which we look after our departed friend, and the tear which embalms her memory, than the thundering plaudits which rend the air with the name of a conqueror. She has obtained a triumph over that foe who shall break the arm of valor, and strike off the crown of kings. *The fashion of this world passeth away.* Old Time approaches toward his last hour. The proudest memorials of human grandeur shall be food for the conflagration to be kindled when *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. Then shall he be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.* There are those, perhaps in the present assembly, who repute godliness fanaticism; and the sobriety of Christian peace, the gloom of a joyless spirit; but who cannot forbear sighing out, with the prophet of mammon, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* If they proceed no further, their wish will not be granted. None shall die the death of the righteous, unless by a rare dispensation of mercy, who do not live his life. They only are fit to be with God, who love God and keep his commandments. In that

day of transport and of terror which we shall all witness, how many of the thoughtless fair who now "sport themselves with their own deceivings," would give all the treasures of the east and thrones of the west, to sit with ISABELLA GRAHAM on the right hand of Jesus Christ! If ye be wise betimes, ye may. *Now is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation.* The gospel of the Son of God offers you, at this very moment, the forgiveness of your sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. The blessing comes to you as a free gift—Accept it, and live. Accept it, and be safe. Accept it, and put away the shudderings of guilt, and the fear of death. Then shall you too, like our friend, go, in due season, to be with Christ. Your happy spirit shall rejoin hers in the mansions of the saved. God shall bring you in soul and body with her when he makes up his jewels —Then shall he gather his elect from the four winds of heaven, shall perfect that which concerneth them and make them fully and forever blessed. Be our place among them in that day!

FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH AND HOPE.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AS PART OF THE ORDINARY MINISTRATIONS

IN

MURRAY STREET CHURCH,

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SERMON IX.

FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH AND HOPE.

2 TIMOTHY I. 12.

For I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.

If ever there was an unlikely subject of conversion to the Christian faith, it was Saul of Tarsus. His education, his habits, his prospects, his ardent and active zeal against Christians, his powerful intellect, his pride, his very conscience, all under the influence of wrong impressions, rendered his perseverance in Judaism morally certain, and the idea of his change, in the eyes of thinking men, perfectly chimerical. Satan himself seemed not less likely to become an apostle, than this fierce and intrepid Jew. His active spirit, and his implacable malignity, *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*, would, if permitted to take

its course, have "made short work with the dissenters" from the order established at Jerusalem; would have crushed the infant church; and scarcely left materials for one paragraph of the general historian. But the Lord Jesus had other views for his church, and other employment for the persecutor. In the height of his career—in the very act of executing the bloody commission of the high priest—when surrounded by armed men, to enforce his orders—at midday—on the public road—near a celebrated city—a burst of glory from the face of Jesus Christ eclipses the brightness of the sun; an invisible power smites him and all his company to the earth; and a voice, the authority of which made him feel that his Creator was speaking, addresses to him those memorable words; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* The high priest, the Sanhedrim, the nation whose hopes all centre in him, his character, his commission, are forgotten in an instant. Men have no leisure for any thing else, when they are conscious that God is speaking. *Who art thou, Lord?* exclaimed the astonished and trembling persecutor: *I am Jesus*, answers the heavenly voice, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Lord*, replies he, every disposition to cavil or tamper being perfectly subdued, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Arise, and go into the city, and*

it shall be told thee what thou must do. Gentle as a lamb, the high-spirited and ferocious Saul obeys the mandate. Smitten blind by the light which shone around him, he is led by the hand into Damascus; where he remained *three days without light, and did neither eat nor drink.* Under such tutelage as no other man ever enjoyed, he passes through the process of conviction and conversion—experiences the second birth—has a new heart put within him—is instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom—is furnished with all gifts and graces—is taught the service which he is to perform, and the sufferings which he is to endure—and comes forth *not a whit behind the chiefest apostles*, and straightway *preaches Christ* in the synagogues, *that he is the Son of God.* Five and twenty years had he tried the service of Christ, when he penned this epistle to Timothy, proving, by turns, and sometimes all together, the honors, the victories, the disappointments, the pains, the sorrows, of his apostleship. At this very moment he was a martyr to the truth, and suffering unheard-of things for the word of his testimony. Yet he utters no complaint; his tone is firm and cheerful; it is the voice of salvation *from the belly of hell. I am not ashamed*, says he, *for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.*

Brethren, there is something in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that persuasion of his ability which belongs to his faithful followers, which bears them up over every discouragement, and will at length enable them to elude the great destroyer, and to fly, *on the wings of the morning*, to the place of their eternal rest. Paul was an example. But he was so, on principles which are common to the household of faith. It was not as an *apostle*, but as a *believer*, that he cherished so triumphant a hope, and sung so sweet a song, in the house of his pilgrimage. It will be of advantage to us, if we take a nearer view of Paul's *knowledge* of the Lord Jesus Christ; and of that *perfect confidence*, which he entertained, that all should be safe in his hands.

I. The *knowledge* which Paul had of his Redeemer; *I know whom I have believed.*

The apostle's knowledge of Jesus Christ was personal, that is, it was a knowledge of Christ himself, and centered in himself; not merely an acquaintance with his religion. Many people imagine, that to know something about the Christian religion, to be able to explain it, and ready to recommend it, is equivalent with knowing Christ himself. Whencesoever they imbibed such a notion, it was not from their Bible. This makes a very broad difference between the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and every other sort of knowledge;

and the scripture does not deal in vain distinctions. The knowledge and the love which accompany salvation go together, and are coupled by the scripture to the *person* of the Savior. *That I may know* HIM, saith Paul. Whom, having not seen, *ye love*, adds Peter. Now here is the parting point with many a decent profession, yet the very point upon which eternal happiness is suspended. Many a demonstration of the Christian verity, and many a splendid panegyric on its excellence, worth, and necessity, have flowed from lips which the fire of God's altar never purified; have been prompted by hearts which were never touched by the love of Christ. Startle not; as if I had preached an unheard of doctrine—but go, if you are not afraid of the experiment—summon the *tongues of men and angels* to speak the praises of revealed truth; and then stand aghast at discovering, that without *charity*, that vivifying principle in the world of grace, you are no better than *sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal*. In living religion *Christ is all*. The hearts of his people are, without exception, drawn, in tender affection, to *himself*. The thought, that *he loved me and gave himself for me*, filled, and subdued, and melted the heart of one apostle; and drew from another the gracious declaration, *We love him, because he first loved us;* and so do all

his sincere followers find the fact to be at the present hour.

Now to both this knowledge and this love of Christ something more is necessary than can be learned from human books, or taught by human speech, or enforced by human example. That which happened unto Paul must happen unto us. God must *reveal his Son in us;* the Holy Spirit must *take of the things which are His, and show them unto us.* Is it wonderful that Christ Jesus was so glorious in the eyes of his apostles; and is now so glorious in the eyes of all who have an apostle's hope?

1. Paul was enabled to take an enlarged and decisive view of the glory of the Redeemer's person. He never dreamt that idiot dream of a *created* Savior. There was no doubt in his mind, nor is there in the minds of any who tread in his steps, whatever there be in the minds of those who pride themselves in their distinction, as philosophical believers, that he who is *the eternal Life*, must be the *true God—God over all, blessed forever.* He perceived him to be, and he celebrated him, and taught others to expect him, as the *great God our Savior.* It was, in his judgment, a mystery, the great mystery of godliness —the very pillar and ground of truth, without which the whole fabric of salvation falls to ruins —*that God was manifest in the flesh*, and so be-

came our *Brother*, and has made us bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

In the person, moreover, of Jesus Christ, all the counsels of the Godhead centre. *In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge —In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.* If God *reconciles the world unto himself, it is in Christ Jesus.* If *the light of his glory shines unto us, it is in the face of Jesus Christ.* If he gathers together in one a new family, composed of holy angels and redeemed men, he gathers them in Christ. If *every knee* is ordered *to bow, and every tongue to confess*, it is to *Jesus Christ, who has a name which is above every name*, and has it expressly for this purpose. In fine, the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, with this end, that *all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father;* and that under the fearful sanction, that whosoever shall refuse so to honor the Son, shall find all his worship rejected: *He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father who hath sent him.*

2. Paul had equally lofty views of the Redeemer's mediatorial work; by whose perfect *obedience many shall be made righteous—who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity —who is the propitiation through faith in his blood, that God may be* JUST, *and the* JUSTIFIER *of him that believeth in Jesus—so that we have re-*

demption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace—who has risen again from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept—who has gone into heaven, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us —who is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us; and is able, therefore, to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

3. Paul had, further, a view of the glory which Jesus Christ has promised to his followers. For them death hath no sting—over them the grave boasts no victory—nor the second death any power. Their Savior shall reclaim their dead bodies: *He shall call, and they shall answer him out of the dust.* Neither death nor hell shall retain them for an instant. They shall spring up in all the alertness of spiritual and incorruptible bodies—shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, and go, in their whole persons, to be forever with the Lord.

All these things the apostle saw—saw them in the light and with the eyes of that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for. They left on his soul an impression never to be obliterated: an impression as deep and vivid as the seal of the Holy Ghost—as the image of the living God. Whenever, afterward, he speaks of his Redeemer, and

of his people's hope in him, his spirit catches fire. O, how unlike the men who are cased in triple ice when they approach the throne of the Son of God! He darts up into the heavens, and when he descends again to earth, it is to scatter

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."

Hear this child of faith and of the skies, singing and shouting, and welcoming the decease which was to take him home: *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto them also that love his appearing.*

Throughout his whole representation of the glory, grace, and promises of Christ, it will not fail to be observed, that there is not so much as a hint of any *doubt.* The Christian religion is not a religion of doubts. Doubting Christians there are, but doubting faith there is none. And it is only when their faith is very low, that there is any place for doubt. *O thou of* LITTLE FAITH, *wherefore didst thou doubt?* The religion of which God is the author, cannot be a religion of doubts. He is the immutable Truth. There

is no room for conjectures, or mere opinions. It is a dishonor to its glorious Revealer, to say upon a subject of eternal hope, "That it is my opinion." *Your opinion*—and to what more is it entitled than the opinion of another man? But when you speak peremptorily, "This is the truth of God," the ground is entirely changed—then "to the law and the testimony." Accordingly the declaration of Paul has no *conjecture* about it. He speaks with the confidence of a man intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ; *I* KNOW *whom I have believed.* A gracious boldness, for an example of which you may in vain turn over the ten thousand pages of philosophical Christians. They know nothing of Jesus Christ, the Savior. They have a great many notions; they sport their several opinions; they are very wise in their own conceit; but about the Lord Jesus, his glory, and his grace, whatever they may prate, they know nothing, and have not the effrontery to pretend that they know any thing: for the object of all their philosophy is to strip him of his glory, and to fritter away his grace, till it is not worth a sinner's acceptance. But what says Paul? I *know* him: there is no uncertainty in the matter; I *know* him, and am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed unto him.

II. We are thus brought to the second point: which is the apostle's *confidence* that every thing is safe in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Here two inquiries challenge our notice: First, what had the apostle *committed* unto his Savior? Second, whence arose his assurance that it was perfectly safe in his hands?

1. What was the deposit which Paul had committed to Jesus Christ? It was evidently something personal—something, about which if his hope were deceived, he might be put to shame—something in which he peculiarly acted as a *believer*. What was this? What could it be but his immortal soul, his redeemed body, his whole interest in the salvation of God? Men in health and spirits may talk, and do talk, with lightness and gayety of their own decease, and affect to think it strange that any but a villain should entertain the least apprehension about his appearance before God. But when age, accident, or sickness, proclaims their course to be nearly run; and the stock of life to be almost exhausted—when the chill atmosphere of the grave smites them with the last ague; and death's icy hand begins to lay hold upon their frame—when the world, with all its illusions, fades upon the sight, and possesses no more the power of charming—when Eternity rises in all its magnitude—displays its dread realities—draws back

the curtain from the judgment-seat—announces the approach of the righteous Judge, and the necessary and speedy appearance before him—O, then, lightness and gayety flee away. They have other thoughts altogether about putting off this body. Nothing but the Christian's hope can sustain their spirits. Then there is seen an emphasis in his words of faith, which was not comprehended before: his brow, glittering in the death-sweat, is encircled with a glory, which sheds infinite contempt upon the baubles of earth; and commands them to remove with their impertinence to a respectful distance. O, I have seen a believer preparing to resign his soul into the hands of his dear Redeemer—have seen him make a practical comment upon the declaration of Paul—have seen how infinitely trifling and foolish the world appears when she presumes to draw near him, and to open her absurd lips. The very worldling could not endure it. Then is the moment of the dying conqueror's triumph. He commends his spirit to Him that loved him, and washed him in his own blood—commits his body to the Resurrection and the Life—commits it "in sure and certain hope" of its being raised again to eternal life: and as the breath departs from his lips, he shouts, Salvation! and is away, amidst the alleluias of angels, to the "bosom of his Father and his God." What

filled him with ecstacy at the arrival of that event which is nature's terror, and from which most of his race shrink and shudder? It was this: *I* KNOW *whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day.* And in what light, think you, does this faith contemplate the Lord Jesus, in trusting him with so precious a deposit? As a creature? a man? a mere man? "frail and peccable?" They who can risk themselves in such hands, *may;* but must sink down to hell with all the faith they have. A man! a mere man! like myself! I would not thus intrust my body, nor a single member of it, to the mightiest angel that God ever created. O no! no! when a Christian anticipates his departure to the eternal world, he must have other and better security. Heaven is not more distant from earth, than is the ground of his confidence from such a broken reed. And never did you hear, nor will you ever hear in future, Paul's language from the mouth of one who makes such desperate experiments with his immortality. But,

2. Whence arose the apostle's persuasion that all is safe in the hands of Jesus Christ? He knew what the Redeemer *is;* what he has *promised;* and what *pledges* he has given both of his ability and faithfulness.

1st. Who the Redeemer *is*. The only begotten Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. The Lord of the invisible world, who was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death. His word equally raised the dead and paralyzed the living. He commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him, with fearful deprecations of his power. He trod upon the earth, as upon a province of his government. The submissive elements performed his word. He is now in heaven, at the right hand of God; angels and principalities and powers being made subject to him. He is given to be head over all things to the church, and makes all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. The light of the Divinity is in his eye; the thunder of God's power is in his arm; and he is most worthy of all the confidence which our souls can concentrate.

2d. Paul knew what the Redeemer has *promised*. Hear—*I give to all my sheep eternal life*, and *they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. He that believeth on me shall never perish, but I will raise him up at the last day. Where I am, there shall also my servant be. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame,*

and am set down with my Father on his throne. Who that shares in these *exceeding great and precious promises*, can dispute that Paul had the best reason in the world to believe the *Amen, the faithful and true Witness?*—to believe him without hesitation—to believe him with his whole heart and soul? *Where is doubting then?* Who dares admit even the thought, that the Lord Jesus will break his word? Admit for an instant the thought that *God should lie!* Where is doubting then, I repeat? *It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.*

3d. The Lord Jesus Christ had given very sufficient *pledges* of his ability and faithfulness to keep what was committed to him, in what he had done *for* the apostle; and in what he had done *in* him; and he was multiplying the reasons of his confidence, by what he was then continuing to do for him.

1. What had Jesus Christ said or done *for* Paul? The same that he has said or done for all the household of God. He became Paul's surety; obeyed perfectly the law of condemnation; authorized him, in humble faith, to claim and plead that obedience, in the room of his own disobedience. He clothed Paul with righteousness—the righteousness of God—the righteousness of God by faith: directing and enabling him to make it his own, and to present it as such, where it would

be properly valued, and sure to be accepted—at the bar of infinite Justice. He well knew what place should be assigned to it in the justification of a sinner. He placed it between himself and the righteous God: and gloried in it accordingly, as his perfect protection against the stroke of divine justice; as his only and unfailing title to eternal life; as that pure gold, in which the furnace of ultimate trial should not detect a particle of dross, nor a single flaw. Not a syllable would he hear of any works but the works of Jesus Christ, to justify him before God. *That I may be found in him*, exclaims he, *not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

This, indeed, is a vital part in the justification of sinful men. Many seem to think that they have no need of any thing but pardon. How then can they be *justified* by a sentence according to law, which enjoins *perfect obedience*? How can they become entitled to eternal life, which was originally promised to such obedience? What has overturned God's constitution? What has broken the connection, established by himself, between the condition and the reward? Nay, that constitution stands; and sinners, if justified at all, must be justified according to its terms—by *obedience*, by *perfect* obedience—but

not by such obedience, be it remembered, as *you* can perform. *You* are all as an unclean thing, and all your righteousness as filthy rags. This renders the plan of grace so wonderful in our eyes—so infinitely worthy of the wisdom of God. The second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, has stepped into the first Adam's place, and done what he as our covenant-head ought to have done: he has fulfilled the righteousness of the law. Thence his precious name, JEHOVAH *our righteousness*. Of this Paul was very certain; and it was one reason of his committing his eternal interests into the hands of Jesus Christ, with the perfect assurance that they would be safe there. Do you, my dear brethren, follow so blessed an example? Cast away, in your dealings with your Creator, *to the moles and to the bats*, every thing, every thing that can, by any possibility of construction, be reckoned as your own righteousness. The very best of it, trusted in, is no better than a mill-stone about your necks; and when God arises to judgment, will sink you to "bottomless perdition." Lay hold of that one righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is able to cover all who take refuge in it, from martyred Abel down to the last believer who shall cry, *Lord, save me, I perish.*

In the next place, Jesus Christ had paid Paul's debt. He owed nothing less than his soul to the

violated law of God; and had not his Savior interposed, the forfeit must have been exacted. But Christ became his security for the amount of that forfeit. He put his own neck under the sword of justice, and redeemed the life of the disciple by the surrender of his own;—redeemed it, without his wish or knowledge—redeemed it, while he was yet a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; that in his case, as a ringleader of rebellion; that in me first—in me as *chief—Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering for a* PATTERN *to them who should afterwards believe on him to life everlasting. For when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* Thus, as their representative, sustaining their persons, meeting all the claims which the righteousness of God preferred, answering all accusations against them, facing every adversary, did the beloved One, as their substitute, and for their benefit, lay down his most precious life for the lives of his chosen. The temptations of the evil one, the unbelief and contradiction of sinners, the insolence of his persecutors, and all the degradations of his humbled state—the whole weight of the curse of God, which would have crushed a world of angels—did he endure, the just for the unjust, that he

might bring us to God. Then was the law magnified and made honorable; more magnified and made more honorable, than it would have been by the unsinning obedience of all the creatures to all eternity. Then he *by himself purged our sins*—then he paid the price of redemption for *an innumerable multitude* of prisoners, whom he *bought unto God by his blood;* and having achieved the glorious work, *entered into the holy place, and forever sat down at the right hand of God, the Majesty on high.* There are some who imagine, and who say, "that we know not, nor does it concern us to know, *in what manner* the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins." And grieved I am to find in this number a writer who has done good service to the cause of truth, by stripping the philosophical Christianity of the day of its borrowed plume, and exposing to the abhorrence of every reasonable man all the nakedness of its pretenses to learning, to candor, to superior light, and all the unbounded insolence with which it treats the word of God itself. I allude to Magee on the Atonement, whose words I have quoted above. But our Lord has not left us in the dark on this point, of the justification of a sinner. We thank his blessed name, that we do know *precisely*, for he has explained to us, as fully as any doctrine in the whole Bible, the connection which his sa-

crifice has with the remission of our sins. It is because he was *made sin for us*, that we are *made the righteousness of God in him*—because he *bare our sins* and *carried our sorrows*, that *by his stripes we are healed.* Had not Jesus been our representative, we should have known nothing, and could have known nothing, about the question, whether there is forgiveness with God. But because he took our place, therefore our sins are expiated. Because he bore the penalty due to us, therefore we are freely forgiven for his name's sake, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. O believer, cling to this gracious connection between Christ's suffering and your release, as to the sheet-anchor of your salvation. This and this alone will bear you up, when earth and earthly things are sinking around you. Paul trusted mightily to it. Therefore he was persuaded that there need be no fear of any thing committed to the Redeemer's hands.

2. Consider what Jesus Christ had done *in* the apostle. All that he had done *without*, had its counterpart *within* his soul. He had wrought out for him an everlasting salvation, and it was necessary that he should be put in possession of it —had purchased for him a heavenly kingdom, and the next thing was to make him fit for the enjoyment of it. Briefly, he turned Paul into a new man—turned him from darkness unto light

—from Satan unto God—from sin unto holiness —changed the relentless persecutor into the suffering lamb—gave to all his affections a holy bias—to all his faculties a heavenly point—to all his pursuits a hallowed direction—filled him with love to Himself and to the souls of men; so that he counted not his life dear unto him, that he might *fulfill the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* This was, to Paul himself, the most stupendous miracle in his history. Could he afterwards question whether the Lord Jesus has "power over all flesh"—over all spirit—when he had, within his own bosom, a living demonstration, no more equivocal than the pulsations of his heart, that the word of the Lord Jesus Christ can convert the fiercest enemy into the most tender and faithful friend? And could he be at a loss—could he hesitate a moment—about committing that soul of his, with all its eternal interests, into hands which had done so great things for him and in him?

3. Much as Jesus Christ had done for Paul, he had far more to do for him, ere his work was finished; and was every day giving fresh tokens of his care and love. He was actually in the highest heavens interceding for the apostle. His intercession we may conceive to be an authoritative exhibition of his accepted sacrifice, in be-

half of his people. Whatever he had purchased for them, he claims as a matter of right to be conferred upon them in such manner, degree, and season, as the Infinite Wisdom shall determine. Thus he sympathizes with their sorrows: *We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.* And the secret communications of that sympathy are of infinite value.

He supplies their present wants, both of body and soul. "He who hangs creation on his arm, and feeds it at his board, will not let slip a ransomed child, nor let it starve." It was not a vain lesson that he taught his disciples—*Give us this day our daily bread.* Moreover he holds their souls in life. The riches of glory treasured up in Christ Jesus, are the fund upon which they draw for their succor in every time of need. If their graces languish, he revives and quickens them. If they are scanty, he *giveth more grace.* If they are hard beset in the spiritual warfare, he throws around them *the shield of his salvation,* and in the end, makes them *more than conquerors.*

Jesus Christ sends down the Holy Spirit to *instruct.* He compensates the personal absence of the Savior. The monitions of this heavenly teacher cause the most simple to be wonderful proficients in divine things. They *grow in grace,*

and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He sends him *to refresh.* He is in them *a well of water springing up to everlasting life.* He sends him to *invigorate.* They are *strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man.* He sends him to *console.* His name is *Comforter;* and his consolations *are neither few nor small.* He sends him *to prosper them in difficult enterprises.* They succeed, *not by might nor by power, but by my* SPIRIT, *saith the Lord.*

Jesus Christ encircled Paul in his arms in the midst of personal danger. His path lay through snares and treacheries, and deaths unnumbered. If he fought with beasts at Ephesus; if he was in the lion's mouth at Rome; if he was stoned with stones at Lystra; his kind and faithful Lord delivered him from them all. *Fear not, Paul,* he had said, *no man shall set upon thee to hurt thee;* and he was true to his promise: and Paul was so sure of it, that he counted confidently on his protection. *The Lord,* says he, *shall deliver me from every evil work, and shall preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.*

By all these means Paul's sanctification was improved. He became every day more meet than he was the day before, for an abundant entrance into his Master's kingdom. He accounted nothing done to purpose, while any thing remained to be done. Not even his past attain-

ments, great and glorious as they were—not even the career of his services, though the most brilliant among the ranks of the saved, could check his ardor for further attainment, for higher Christian distinction. *I count not myself,* says he, *to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Now put all these considerations together, and ask whether Paul's confidence in the ability and grace of the Lord Jesus, to keep what he had committed unto him, till the day of final decision, was weak or chimerical? Whether it was not the most sober conclusion, drawn from the firmest premises? Whether it left any possible room for misgivings and fears? And whether Paul has not exemplified, in his own person, the privilege common to all believers, and the true and proper effect of the religion which they profess?

Let us try if we cannot reap some profitable instruction from this interesting subject.

1. Every real believer has direct and confidential transactions with the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Paul, he has committed all that he is, and all that he has—whatever is most precious for time and for eternity—his body, his soul, his hope, his reversion in heaven, to the hands of his

faithful Redeemer. Have *you* done so, my hearers? Have *you* done it, professed Christians? Ah, how wide a difference does this make between the formalist and the genuine disciple! Let me ask again, for the question is a vital one: You who name the name of Jesus, who pass for the converts of his grace, and have sworn fealty to his cause, what have *you* to say? Did you ever give yourselves up formally, fully, irrevocably, to be his property, and at his disposal? When, where, how, did you make the blessed surrender? How do you prove the fact? What obedience do you perform? What self-denials do you endure? What sacrifices, even of the most worthless of your possessions, the trash of this earth, do you offer? Who, of all the numerous retainers of the Christian name, of all the decent professors of godliness, will trust his Redeemer for to-morrow's bread? Who of them would not rather rely on the respectable signer of a bank-note, than upon all the promises of the faithful God? Were it put to the trial, who of them would not grasp the paper, and let go the truth and the oath of a faithful God, who cannot lie, among the uncertainties of life? And can any man, with such practical feelings, really dupe himself with the persuasion that he trusts the Lord Jesus for the kingdom of the just? That he *believes* in that most generous sacrifice which

Jesus Christ made for him—the blood of his cross? Not a word! Not a single word! He is as absolute an unbeliever in the Captain of our salvation, and as absolute an idolater, in his own way, as any poor wretch that ever threw himself under the wheels of Juggernaut. And that he will find, if death overtake him in his present condition, when the Stone which the builders rejected shall grind him to powder. Bear with me, my friends, I may not prophesy smooth things—may not palliate—I must declare the whole truth, on the peril of treason to my heavenly Master. If any of you find it cut deep, *there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there.* I can do nothing but commend you to *the Lord, the Healer.*

2. Let us remark a peculiar property in the Christian religion, as it exists in the Bible, and in the hearts of those who are thoroughly under its influence—unwavering confidence of spiritual and unseen realities—*I* KNOW *whom I have believed.*

The religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of *faith.* It acknowledges no conjecture, no surmises, no peradventure. It rests upon the surest of all foundations—that impenetrable rock on which the gates of hell can make not the least impression—the testimony of the living GOD. It demands the unhesitating consent of our hearts.

It contains no provision for doubts. Doubting, in every possible degree, is an implied impeachment of the veracity of its divine Author, and most signally dishonors his glorious name. Every Christian in the world ought to say, as peremptorily as the apostle, *I* KNOW *whom I have believed;* and to be carried by his faith as fearlessly and triumphantly along as he was, through duties, difficulties, and death itself, perfectly assured that he shall find it all safe at *that day.* Then why is the fact so different? Why is the world so full of doubts, and fears, and lamentations, even on the part of Christians themselves, that there is scarcely heard any more the *voice of joy and rejoicing in the tabernacles of the righteous?* The fact is indisputable; and allow me to say it is one of those high indecencies which disgrace your profession. It does not become you, Christians, to act and to talk as if your religion were no better than a human speculation, and your Redeemer an adventurer, who may or who may not fulfill the expectations he has raised, as shall hereafter be found convenient. There is not one of you who would not feel himself injured and insulted by the twentieth part of that mistrust in his truth, which he himself is habitually exercising, ('tis well that he does it ignorantly,) towards Jesus Christ.

But still, how is the fact to be explained? Very easily, though not very honorably, for those who furnish evidence of its existence. A neglect to cultivate grace already bestowed, opens the door of the heart to a multitude of those evil doubts. An untender walk—more according to the fashion of this world, than according to the will of God, than your duty, your privileges, your promises, your obligations to redeeming love, exact—grieves the good Spirit of God; mightily shakes your hope; and brings your souls into bondage and terrors. A guilty conscience and a settled piece, or an unbending faith, cannot dwell together in the same bosom. Omissions of known duties—of opportunities of serving and honoring our Master, when fairly put in our way—do naturally and necessarily invite this rebuke. We cannot expect to enjoy the comforts of faith, while the uses for which it was given are unfaithfully overlooked.

But that which is the most common and extensive cause of the criminal state and temper exhibited by the Christian community, in the article of their confidence before God, is *walking by* SIGHT, *and not by faith.* Christians are formed for an immortality of action, blessedness, and glory, in a future state and a better world. Earth has no principles from which to draw any conclusions, about the employments or pleasures of

heaven. The philosopher and the clown; the men of large or of little acquaintance with human nature; the most refined reason and the most gross, are alike ignorant and foolish on this point. We know nothing at all but what God has been pleased to tell us. And he has told us no more than is absolutely necessary for our present Christian being. *Thus saith the Lord*, contains the ground of all our convictions, the elements of all our reasonings, upon the approaching condition of the just. We must take his word for every thing; and take it solely because he hath said it. Yet our principal concern in this world is with the invisible realities of the next, and with those affections, principles, and habits, which are linked in with them, by a continuity of existence; which are the great preparatives for them; and are nurtured, and strengthened, by means and influences as much depending upon our *faith*, as is our interest in the realities themselves.

Now it is perfectly evident, that a life of mere sense, such a life as is common to men who pretend to nothing more than sense can give them, is utterly hostile to the Christian's hope and calling. And yet what do we see, I do not say among those who *profess*, but among those who, we must hope, *experience* the faith of God's elect? What, but an incessant contradiction to their

heavenly vocation? They believe strongly, when all their sensations go on comfortably. But the instant any thing happens to disturb these sensations, their faith and their confidence flag. It is all well so long as they *feel* comfortably; but the moment any thing untoward happens to their bodily perceptions—if they do not feel well—if their health is disordered—if their spirits are depressed—if the east wind affects their nerves—melancholy forebodings invade them; their past experience is all a delusion; their hope vanishes; despair fills their minds: and so the whole of their confidence turns out to be something which depends upon their physical health, or some accidental circumstance. Do you call this believing on the Son of God? Does his faithfulness rest upon the fickleness of your frame? Or is he to be insulted with your doubts, whenever the mechanism of your body is disturbed? Nay, if you ask for better assurance than his words of promise—if that will not fortify you against the ills of life and death—if you have not learned, with the father of the faithful, against hope to believe in hope, *not staggering at the promise of God through unbelief*, make thorough work of it; cast away his name, his badge, and his livery; take all the comfort that sense can bring you; but do not, whatever else you

pretend to, do not set up for a believer in Jesus Christ.

Yet to those who can and do trust the faithful Savior and his unaltering word, I say, Fear not. Your Lord will perfect that which concerneth you. Your interests are infinitely safe. Your small concerns, as you may account them, are bound up with him in the bundle of everlasting memory; and will no more be forgotten than the concerns of a world. However seemingly worthless your deposit, he will remember it to your unspeakable joy. Give then your fears to the winds. Order all your doubts to be gone. And let the gracious emotion pass from heart to heart, till the shout of confidence shall drown the voice of repining; and the world and the church shall be surprised with the triumph of that song: *I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him, until that day.* AMEN.

THE EVANGELICAL MINISTRY EXEMPLIFIED IN THE APOSTLE PAUL.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN MURRAY STREET CHURCH,

DEC. 2, 1821,

ON THE OCCASION OF

RESIGNING HIS CHARGE OF HIS CONGREGATION.

SERMON X.

EVANGELICAL MINISTRY EXEMPLIFIED.

ACTS XX. 17—27.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto

myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.

Next to our Lord Jesus Christ, the name which figures most gloriously in the early stages of the Christian story, is that of the apostle Paul. The grandeur of his mind, his intellectual and moral magnanimity, his heroic devotion, his patience in suffering; his powerful genius, his decision, his eloquence, his zeal, shine in every page of his writings, raise the admiration and awe the spirits of his readers, and make them feel that they enter into communion with a being of a superior order. But it is not that peculiar greatness which was inseparable from every act of the man, and excites our veneration while it forbids our rivalship, that creates our deepest interest in his character. Our understandings may be penetrated with light which has no power of warming our hearts. The most profound respect does not necessarily call forth our love. Our affections must be *won;* they can-

not be *stormed*. To this principle of our nature God has been pleased to pay particular regard, in the first heralds of the cross. However diversified their qualities and attainments—whatever be the zeal of one, the potency of argument in another, the intrepid courage of a third, that which bears the sway in all, is their loveliness. Our hearts are captivated by the same process which subdues our understandings. Nothing, for example, can be more fair and unanswerable, than when Paul closes in his argument with the subtle philosopher; nothing more terrible than when he deals out the thunders of God among the gainsayers: and nothing more exquisitely tender, than his carriage toward the timid and scrupulous disciple. If ever a man knew how to wind his way into the human soul—how to coil around him its most sacred affections—how to explore the secret place of tears, and to put in motion all its kindest sympathies, the apostle Paul was certainly that man. You know that this has always been with me a favorite theme; that my heart has enlarged, my imagination brightened; and my steps have trodden almost upon fairy ground, when they have been roused and quickened by the name of Paul. But on no occasion does he loom so high, and shine so gloriously, as in the context. All his powers are concentrated; his feelings are condensed into a

point; the covering is shoved aside from his breast, and you see, without disguise, the workings of his ingenuous, his upright, his mighty mind. This parting address to the elders of Ephesus well deserved a place in the holy volume; and deserves it in our best regards, in our most reverential remembrance.

I propose to give you, on this occasion, an analysis of part of the apostle's discourse. You will find it to contain, an account of the manner in which he discharged his ministry among the Ephesians, ver. 18—21; his extreme devotedness to the cause in which he was embarked, ver. 22—24; and his presentiment of its being the closing of his ministry, with an affectionate appeal to their consciences, and the ground of that appeal, 25—27.

I. An account of the manner in which he discharged his ministry among the Ephesians, ver. 18—21.

1. He served the Lord with all *humility of mind.* The apostles, unlike many of their pretended successors, aimed at no worldly honors, distinctions, nor titles. "Rabbi" is not to be met with in their whole vocabulary. The name of *lords bishops* was utterly unknown to them, nor would they have thought it a meet appellation for the followers of a crucified Master. Whatever be its origin or use, the spirit

of the apostles disclaims it, and holds no fellowship with the temper which it is calculated to cherish. Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, was their highest earthly designation, and rank, and glory. Paul had talents, and powers, and proficiency, which fairly entitle him to a pre-eminence among his brethren; but the only pre-eminence which he courted was a pre-eminence in dangerous service to the glory of his Master. Let little men sigh after these trifles: it suits their capacities; it is fit for their ambition; but neither an apostle, nor an apostolic man, wishes for any more dignified style, or holy occupation, than to be known in the church as *serving the Lord.*

There is a consideration which weighs much with every gracious heart, and is not, cannot be, easily forgotten—the immense distance between the Lord Jesus and his most faithful servants. He, the living God; they, creatures low in the scale of being, when compared with other creatures which *excel in strength, yet obey his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. The treasure is in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God.* The angels, who look, with studious anxiety, into the mysteries of redemption by Jesus Christ, would thankfully have accepted the appointment of *ambassadors* of the cross. But God has seen fit to confer that honor upon men of like passions with others;

and commanded the angels to be ministering spirits. When we add, that these heralds of his truth were sinners like other men, called by divine grace out of the common condemnation, and sent to tell their fellow-sinners that *there is forgiveness with God*, how august the message! how humbling to the messenger! He cannot, or ought not to, forget one single moment, that *by grace he is saved;* and the more profound and lively his sense of this truth, the more completely will he enter into the feelings of Paul, who served the Lord with all humility of mind. Could Paul need a monitor to remind him that he was once a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; that he obtained mercy because the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant*, and obtained it for this end, that in him, first, the Savior *might show forth all long-suffering to them who should believe on him to life everlasting?* He could not open his lips to proclaim the riches of redeeming love, without at the same time exhibiting himself as a monument of that love. No wonder that his service was so strongly tinged with humility. There is nothing, my brethren, which can so humble and elevate a man's soul as a powerful experience of the love of Christ. Nor is any thing more unbecoming, more desolating to the holy charac-

ter—more indicative of communion with the devil, than clerical superciliousness.

Unassuming as were the apostle's manners—innocent as was his conversation—useful as was his whole life, his course was nevertheless a course of trouble. For,

2. His ministry was marked by *many tears*, and many *temptations, which befell him by the lying in wait of the Jews.*

The *tears* of an apostle have upon our minds a most melting influence. Our own are disposed to mingle with them upon the bare mention of his. But, after all, what called them forth? You do not hear of his weeping before the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem—before the Roman governor, into whose presence he was brought in chains. No! *there* was a proper scene for a spirit which neither the Sanhedrim, nor the Roman governor, in all his authority, could subdue or bow. He appeared before them less as the criminal than as the judge. His mind rose, his spirit towered, till all before him seemed to be, what indeed they were, comparatively very little men. What then could bring tears, and *many* tears, from the eyes of a man who could make governors tremble on their bench of justice? The overflowings of his own benevolent heart! When he saw how men slighted their own mercies—how they rejected, some with civil, some

with contumelious air, as they do at this hour, the salvation of God, and *put away from them the words of eternal life;* having before him the perils which they encountered, and a full view of the ruin which they could not escape, his whole soul was dissolved in tenderness, and he wept his tears of bitterness over their infatuation. The terror of the Roman government could not extort from his firmness a single drop —the sight of an immortal soul, perishing in its iniquity, and pleased with its delusions, altogether unmanned him, and suffused his cheeks with tears, which in other cases would have been the sign of weakness.

Objections and oppositions were not the only impediments of the apostle's career. Many trials befell him *by the lying in wait of the Jews.* That Paul was their countryman, in whom they had prided themselves—that he was among the Pharisees, whom the nation almost idolized—that he had been their ring-leader in persecuting the new religion, all passed for nothing. He was now a follower of the crucified Nazarene, and nothing but his blood would assuage their wrath. All the world over, the disciples of the Lord Jesus have been singled out as objects of ultimate violence. It is not to be wondered at in a world under the influence of him who *was a murderer from the beginning.* And if their con-

dition is better now, it is because the gospel has triumphed over human madness, and hath put the abettors of wickedness to shame.

Paul trod continually, not amidst vipers and scorpions, but, what is infinitely worse, the snares of hellish men. Every sermon furnished materials for a new conspiracy; every step a track for the bloodhounds. The cowards who shrunk from his eye, would yet venture to stab him from behind. It was only by *lying in wait*, that the Jews hoped for success. But all this was not to shake the resolution nor alter the conduct of Paul. Such as the grace of our Jesus made him, both the church and her adversaries always found him.

In the midst of these discouragements, nothing could arrest his zeal, nor silence his testimony: "he kept back nothing that was profitable to his Ephesian hearers." Neither the love of fame, nor the hope of gaining a party, ever called forth Paul's exertions. His anxiety was to be *useful;* popularity, at the expense of duty, had no charms for him. Wo to that preacher who makes his office subservient to the applause of his fellow-men. Whether his hearers approved or disapproved—whether the doctrines coincided with the popular prejudice, or were directly hostile to it, it was the same thing to this wise and gallant apostle. He had to do with *God*, *who*

searcheth the hearts; human opinions dwindled away into their native insignificance, before him *whose judgment is according to truth;* and therefore he kept back nothing that was profitable to those who frequented his ministry. He showed them that truth which admits of no compromise; he had but one doctrine, which he *taught publicly, and from house to house.* Be he where he might, in the solemn assembly or in the domestic circle, his instructions were the same. It is of the very nature of truth that it should be so. And it equally belongs to imposture to utter things unpleasant in public, and fritter them away in private; or to utter them in private, and suppress them in public. His discourses in the church he followed up with his explanations and applications at home. *From house to house* the apostle might be tracked upon this line of life.

This passage has been used as furnishing a divine warrant, and proving a divine obligation, to what is termed parochial visitation. Highly important it is no doubt; but men must be careful that they do not convert the sound of words into a divine warrant, and not to require bricks without straw. To prove that apostolic example establishes a precedent for imitation, we must be sure that the circumstances to which it is applied are similar. But this is far from

being the case in the present instance. There are two things in which the state of the churches now differs materially from their state in primitive times.

In the first place, they had inspired teachers; who could, therefore, spend the whole week in exhorting, confirming, consoling their converts, without infringing on their preparations for the Lord's day. Our situation is quite different: close and habitual study are necessary for us. And if we cannot get time to attend to it, our ministrations grow uninteresting, and our congregations lean. As for those men who boast of working at the loom all the week, and then acquitting themselves well on the Lord's day, I shall say nothing but that their performances are such as might be expected from the loom; but as far as can well be conceived from the labors of a *workman who rightly divides the word of truth.*

In the next place, the primitive churches never permitted themselves to suffer for want of laborers. Their spiritual advancement was, in their eyes, infinitely more valuable than all the pelf which the maintenance of their ministers required. Look over the Acts of the Apostles, and be astonished at the abundance of help which the churches then enjoyed. *Our* economical plan is to make the pastor do the work which was anciently done by three or four, and

the very natural consequence follows, the work is *badly* done, or the workman is sacrificed. In our own city, from the accumulation of inhabitants, and their very dispersed residences, if we were to visit as much, or any thing like it, as our people are good enough to wish, and unreasonable enough to expect, we should not have an hour left for our proper business; we could make no progress in the knowledge of the scriptures; and not one would be able to preach a sermon worthy a sensible man's hearing. The conclusion is almost self-evident: if congregations will stint themselves in workmen, they must have their work spoiled; and if the work be done at all, they must kill the mind or body of the workman; and sometimes both. Let them not deceive themselves. If they impose hardships which God never commanded, they must expect to go without his blessing.

The burden of Paul's preaching, whether to the Jew or Gentile, was *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

That their conceptions and feelings toward God were radically wrong; that these must be altered and purified; and that all their views must centre in our Lord Jesus Christ, as *the way, the truth, and the life*, in order to human happiness, his word constantly declares, and the experience of men as constantly confirms. This great

truth, *Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God*, flowed alike from the tongue and from the pen of Paul, and was, in fact, "the head and front of his offending," with both Jews and Gentiles. This, however, must be the substance of his testimony. And so it must be still. All who hope to win sinners unto God, and to have them as *crowns of rejoicing* in that day, must, like Paul, *determine to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* And cursed with all the curses which are written in this book, be that ministry of which Christ is not the all and in all.

Such is a very feeble outline of the nature of Paul's ministry. O happy, thrice happy, the man who nearly imitates it! We have much reason to blush and be ashamed, when we compare ourselves with this prince of preachers; and have infinite need to address you, my Christian friends, the request of this glorious man of God, *Brethren, pray for us.*

II. We are next called to witness Paul's extreme devotedness to the cause in which he was engaged. He was *bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem.* The Holy Ghost put forth a constraining influence upon him to go to that city. He had often heard, and well knew, the voice—had often felt, and well understood, the impression which signified his duty to go to the metropolis of persecution. Of the general nature of the

impulse he was well assured. He knew that it came from God, and could not lead him astray. This was sufficient to mark out the course of his obedience. What was to befall him at Jerusalem he could not tell; he only knew that no rest awaited him there. *The Holy Ghost witnessed, that in every city, bonds and afflictions abode him.* Go where he would, he was sure that his fidelity would be put to the severest test—sure that whoever found the Christian cause a cause of ease and comfort, it was to be no ease nor comfort to him. Well, how does the prospect affect him? He was not such a fanatic as to court pain when he might have avoided it. The school of Beccaria and Voltaire, which teach that the severity of punishment multiplies the offense, was not then known; or, had it been known, would hardly have caught the ear of Paul. He did not dream of fitting himself for the duties of an apostle, by proclaiming war upon the principles of common sense, and the common feelings of human nature. He knew, and never shrinked from the original condition of his Master's service. *Whosoever denieth not himself, and taketh not up his cross, and followeth not after me, cannot be my disciple.* Show me the cross, exclaimed this magnanimous man; spread out before me all the self-denials I may be called to endure: be they what they may, I must be a dis-

ciple! He did not doubt that his Lord would make up all to him in due season: *for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

One of the idlest of human efforts is, the attempt to frighten a man who has deliberately resolved to sacrifice his life, or to succeed in his undertaking. You have lost your hold of him. When you have threatened him with death, you have done your worst, and have no terrors left. It is then that the great Commander steps on the scene, and says, *Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him.* Paul entered thoroughly into this feeling: and therefore all appeals to human power and human pains,—to the axe, the gibbet, or the stake, were without effect upon him; for *he endured as seeing him who is invisible.* And so, my friends, will it be with us, in proportion as our converse is with eternal realities. Reckon not, when the great trial comes, upon the strength, and courage, and nerves, which have commanded human ap-

plause, and secured human expectation. "I cannot argue for Christ," said a female martyr, "but I can burn for him." Her faith was of the same sort with the apostle's; and therefore she did not even count her life dear unto herself, that she might finish her course with joy. My brethren, how could you, the best, the most resolute of you all, abide this test of the apostolic or female martyr? I do not say, that in a life of ease and comfort, which God has vouchsafed to you, you are called to exercise the grace of martyrdom: but I do say, that if, upon your deliberate choice, your preference lean to any thing else than our Lord Jesus Christ, you have nothing to expect but that he will cast you out of his kingdom. The apostle was always practical; *i. e.* he never preached Christian duties, or painted Christian trials, without a reference to the possibility of his being called to the performance of the one, or to the endurance of the other. He now felt all the considerations from both press hard upon him. One of his sweet enjoyments arose from the presence and sympathy of his fellow-Christians. He found that this was to be interrupted—to be closed: and that drew from him, in the

III. Place, his presentiment of the present being the last opportunity of converse with his Ephesian friends. *And now, behold, I know that*

ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more!"

There is a relation, and a tenderness of relation, produced between a people and the instrument of their spiritual blessings, which nothing on earth can equal: something which identifies him with all their affections, and which they cannot easily transfer: something which creates a soothing pillow for him in every bosom; and for which every exchange is little better than a pillow of thorns. On this subject it is impossible for me to enlarge: could I summon up apathy enough, your own feelings would not endure it. Let me, therefore, rather invite you away from this touching theme to Paul's appeal to the consciences of his hearers. Thus runs its terrible but affectionate language: *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.* There is a most awful trust committed by the Lord Jesus to his ministering servants. It is nothing less than the *blood of men.* O that they felt this trust more than they sometimes do! You would not see the pulpit converted into a stage for the display of human ingenuity, or perverted to the display of human vanity. These things are lighter than a

feather, and lose all their importance in the eyes of a man who remembers that he has an account to settle with God *for blood;* and that he knows not the moment when his account may be demanded. It is observable, and ought to sink deep into your hearts, and especially into the heart of every preacher of the gospel, that Paul accounted himself pure from the blood of men, because he had not concealed from them any part of God's truth. He knew not that policy by which some pulpits have been disgraced, of deferring the declaration of the *whole* truth to a more convenient season. As if the native enmity of the heart were to be softened by delay—as if it could be reduced by any thing but by the truth itself—as if men ever found their audiences more tractable by this kind of forbearance; or were themselves more instrumental in bringing sinners to God: or had the answer of a good conscience more complete in their own bosoms. God, my friends, knows infinitely better than we, what truths are suited to our circumstances, and has revealed them in his book; and accursed be that prudence which suggests the propriety of suppressing any one of them. If there is one trait of a faithful minister more obvious than another, it is this, that he is not afraid nor ashamed to

say what God has said before him in his word.

Here, my beloved friends, is a breathing place for every honest messenger of God's truth: may I be permitted to say that I feel it to be so myself? When the ministry of Paul is the subject, blushes and tears become the sense which I cannot but perceive of the immense disparity. But in this particular, I can stand even in the presence of God, and can say, that in so far as he has been pleased to enlighten me, I have never shunned to declare his *whole* counsel. You know that, in this matter, I have not *sought glory of men*—have not made their applause, not even your applause, how respectable soever, my object—have never concealed a truth, however unpopular; nor ever asked if it were acceptable or not. It has always been enough for me to have the word of God on my side. And when that has been clear, you cannot forget how frequently, nay, how habitually, you have been turned over to his tribunal. On this ground do I stand in this awful day of my life. Bear witness against me if I have not told you the truth. Very feebly, I own; very imperfectly, I do confess: but corruptly never. And, O my friends, remember that you have a heavy account to render, an account for blood, for your *own blood*. I call heaven and earth, and your own consciences, to witness against

you this day, that if you perish, *your blood will be upon your own heads, I am clean.* With this cheering, but melancholy assurance, I close my ministry among you. Yet let me say, are there any of you to whom that ministry has been sanctified? Bless the Father of mercies; and do not waste your anxieties upon the worthless instrument. *Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, to complete in you all the good pleasure of his goodness,* till he bring you to his kingdom, shouting, *grace, grace!*

Are there none here, and those whom we respect and love for their amiable and social qualities, yet who never knew what it is to love the Lord Jesus Christ? To whom his truth, proclaimed day after day, has been like water poured into a sieve; all *spilled on the ground, and not gathered up.* Let me say to you, my friends, perhaps it is the last time, the day of *your* reckoning cometh; and you will find that the things so lightly esteemed by you are not forgotten by your God. Who of you would escape going down to the pit? Who would not? Then hear, and hear it again, and hear it as for eternity—*There is forgiveness with God!* The doors of his mercy are not closed! The very chief of sinners may yet find acceptance with him through his

dear Son. *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life* FREELY; yes, FREELY; with all the welcome of God's authority, and all the riches of God's bounty, FREELY, *so iniquity shall not be his ruin.*

It may be expected that on this occasion I should deliver my thoughts concerning the person who is to take my place, and concerning your own part in the selection. How unfit I am for the discharge of these duties, I abundantly feel; and particularly how much easier it is to tell you what you should *not* do, than what you *should.* Yet, such as I have, give I unto you; and in that name which you should never hear quoted with lightness or irreverence—the name of Jesus.

I trust you will not choose a *vain* man, who occupies the pulpit more to display himself, than to profit you. Of all the melancholy things seen among men, this is perhaps the most melancholy; a poor, sinful being complimenting himself upon the discharge of his office, while the ministering angels look upon him with a mixture of dislike, of shame, and of horror: and while his Judge, before whom he is shortly to appear, regards him with a frown, of which the interpretation is, "Ill done! thou bad and faithless servant; enter thou not into the joy of thy Lord!"

2. Do not choose a *showy* man. Many of these men there are who have only *outside.* You will be as sick of him at last, as you were enamored of him at first. You will speedily find that he cannot instruct nor edify you; and will be heartily tired of seeing him show himself.

3. Do not choose a man who always preaches upon insulated texts. I care not how powerful or eloquent he may be in handling them. The effect of his power and eloquence will be, to banish a taste for the word of God, and to substitute the preacher in its place. You have been accustomed to hear that word preached to you in its connection. Never permit that practice to drop. Foreign churches call it *lecturing;* and when done with discretion, I can assure you, that, while it is of all exercises the most difficult for the preacher, it is, in the same proportion, the most profitable for you. It has this peculiar advantage, that in going through a book of scripture, it spreads out before you all sorts of character, and all forms of opinion; and gives the preacher an opportunity of striking every kind of evil and of error, without subjecting him to the invidious suspicion of aiming his discourses at individuals.

4. Do not choose a man of *dubious* principles. The truth of God was given to be *proclaimed,*

not suppressed. It is a *city set on a hill*—a light which must shine, and not be smothered under a bushel. When I hear of a man's preaching for years together in such a manner that his most attentive and intelligent hearers are unable to conjecture what his sentiments are upon the cardinal truths of revelation, I cannot avoid pronouncing him a *traitor*. His business is to preach Christ; and not to treat the gospel as if it were a bundle of mere negations: and see his hearers sink down, one after another, in death, uninstructed, unwarned, unprepared, through his negligence: and himself following them with all the "deep damnation" of their blood upon his soul. O! it is inconceivably fearful!

5. Above all things, it is devoutly to be hoped that you will never invite to the "care of your souls," one who cares nothing about them. I mean, more particularly, for I would not be misunderstood, a man who belongs to those who miscall themselves "rational Christians." Against these men I have ever warned you, as the enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all that is valuable in his religion, and peculiar in his salvation. I know well that this congregation is considered by them as the very focus of what they term bigotry; and I do rejoice that thus far I and you have been counted wor-

thy to suffer shame for his name. Long may it continue so! This pulpit, this church, were destined to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Let them never be polluted by a foot, nor profaned by a tongue, which are not moved by his honor.

I cannot better describe the character of a profitable ministry than it is done to my hand in a work too little known, *the Directory for Public Worship*, under the head *Of the Preaching of the Word.*

"Ordinarily, the subject of his sermon is to be some text of scripture, holding forth some principle or head of religion, or suitable to some special occasion; or he may go on in some chapter, psalm, or book of the holy scripture, as he shall see fit.

"Let the introduction to his text be brief and perspicuous, drawn from the text itself, or context, or some parallel place, or general sentence of scripture.

"If the text be long, (as in histories or parables it sometimes must be,) let him give a brief sum of it: if short, a paraphrase thereof, if need be: in both, looking diligently to the scope of the text, and pointing at the chief heads and grounds of doctrine which he is to raise from it.

"In analyzing and dividing his text, he is to regard more the order of matter than of words: and neither to burden the memory of the hearers in the beginning with too many members of division, nor to trouble their minds with obscure terms of art.

"In raising doctrines from the text, his care ought to be, *First*, That the matter be the truth of God. *Secondly*, That it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text, that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence. *Thirdly*, That he chiefly insist upon those doctrines which are principally intended, and make most for the edification of the hearers.

"The doctrine is to be expressed in plain terms; or if any thing in it need explication, it is to be opened, and the consequence also from the text cleared. The parallel places of scripture confirming the doctrine are rather to be plain and pertinent than many, and (if need be) somewhat insisted upon, and applied to the purpose in hand.

"The arguments or reasons are to be solid, and, as much as may be, convincing. The illustrations, of what kind soever, ought to be full of light, and such as may convey the truth into the hearer's heart with spiritual delight.

"If any doubt, obvious from scripture, reason, or prejudice of the hearers, seem to arise, it is

very requisite to remove it, by reconciling the seeming differences, answering the reasons, and discovering and taking away the causes of prejudice and mistake. Otherwise it is not fit to detain the hearers with propounding or answering vain or wicked cavils, which as they are endless, so the propounding and answering of them doth more hinder than promote edification.

"He is not to rest in general doctrine, although ever so much cleared and confirmed, but to bring it home to special use, by application to his hearers: which, although it prove a work of great difficulty to himself, requiring much prudence, zeal, and meditation, and to the natural and corrupt man will be very unpleasant; yet he is to endeavor to perform it in such a manner that his auditors may feel the word of God to be quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and that, if any unbeliever or ignorant person be present, he may have the secrets of his heart made manifest, and give glory to God.

"In the use of instruction or information in the knowledge of some truth, which is a consequence from his doctrine, he may (when convenient) confirm it by a few firm arguments from the text in hand, and other places of scripture, or from the nature of that commonplace in divinity, whereof that truth is a branch.

"In confutation of false doctrines, he is neither to raise an old heresy from the grave, nor to mention a blasphemous opinion unnecessarily: but, if the people be in danger of an error, he is to confute it soundly, and endeavor to satisfy their judgments and consciences against all objections.

"In exhorting to duties, he is, as he seeth cause, to teach also the means that help to the performance of them.

"In dehortation, reprehension, and public admonition, (which require special wisdom,) let him, as there shall be cause, not only discover the nature and greatness of the sin, with the misery attending it, but also show the danger his hearers are in to be overtaken and surprised by it, together with the remedies and best way to avoid it.

"In applying comfort whether general against all temptations, or particular against some special troubles or terrors, he is carefully to answer such objections as a troubled heart and afflicted spirit may suggest to the contrary.

"But the servant of Christ, whatever his method be, is to perform his whole ministry.

"Painfully, not doing the work of the Lord negligently.

"Plainly, that the weakest may understand; delivering the truth not in the enticing words of

man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; abstaining also from an unprofitable use of unknown tongues, strange phrases, and cadences of sounds and words; sparingly citing sentences of ecclesiastical or other human writers, ancient or modern, be they ever so elegant.

"Faithfully, looking at the honor of Christ, the conversion, edification, and salvation of the people, not as his own gain or glory; keeping nothing back which may promote those holy ends; giving to every one his own portion, and bearing indifferent respect unto all, without neglecting the meanest, or sparing the greatest, in their sins.

"Wisely, framing all his doctrines, exhortations, and especially his reproofs, in such a manner as may be most likely to prevail: showing all due respect to each man's person and place, and not mixing his own passion or bitterness.

"Gravely, as becometh the word of God; shunning all such gesture, voice, and expressions, as may occasion the corruption of men to despise him and his ministry.

"With loving affection, that the people may see all coming from his godly zeal, and hearty desire to do them good. And,

"As taught of God, and persuaded in his own heart, that all that he teacheth is the truth of Christ; and walking before his flock as an example to them in it; earnestly, both in private and public, recommending his labors to the blessing of God, and watchfully looking to himself, and the flock whereof the Lord hath made him overseer: so shall the doctrine of truth be preserved uncorrupt, many souls be converted and built up, and himself receive manifold comforts of his labors even in this life, and afterward the crown of glory laid up for him in the world to come."

After all, be it never forgotten, that it is the Lord Jesus himself who must send you a pastor after his own heart. The ministry of the word is his ascension-gift; and if there is one thing more than another for which he will be inquired of by his church, this is the important thing. Then look up to him for the Holy Spirit, as the *spirit of grace and supplication.* Pray for the effusion of his heavenly grace. Pray in secret, in private, and in public—in your closets, in your families, in your social meetings, after such form as you may find most suitable to your circumstances; be instant in your intreaties to the throne of grace, and give the Hearer of prayer no rest, till he hear you from his holy heaven, and grant you the hallowed desires of your hearts.

And now, my dear friends, the moment of so much trembling anxiety, of which you and I have turned away from the sight—the moment of severance is come. Yet in the midst of those agitations which it excites, there are two considerations which comfort and soothe my spirit—

1. I leave you in peace.

During the whole course of my ministration among you, it is my happiness to be conscious that there has been no strife between us. Never has there been any misunderstanding between my people and myself. Harmony unbroken has marked my intercourse with them all. Between officers and private Christians, and myself, not a shadow of collision has ever occurred. I part with you without one unkind feeling. Many infirmities have you borne with: and for the affectionate regards of so many years continuance, I return this day, all that is in my power, the thanks of a grateful heart, which assuredly do not proceed from feigned lips. Now, my beloved friends, for a recompense of the same, go on cultivating the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Take care that the election of a new pastor do not become a source of contention and heart-burnings. *Pray for the peace of your Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love her. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes,*

I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good. And may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect to do his will, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

2. The second consolatory thought is, that the Lord Jesus is the living head, the centre of union, to all his people.

Their souls are bound up with him in the same bundle of life. Nothing, my Christian friends, can ever part us from him. *What shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Well, then, though far asunder, we shall be still united: we remove not one hair's breadth from the mercy-seat. There I shall meet you, and remember you. There do you also remem-

ber me. We may be abundantly happy in the light of his countenance. Ever bear in mind that the Disposer of our lot is the Savior of our souls.

A word to the young people of my charge shall finish my discourse. My dear young friends, you are the hope of the church; *your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?* Older Christians must be gathered to their rest, and you must occupy their places. That terrible deposit, THE TRUTH OF GOD, must come into your hands. Ask your souls, how will you receive it? The Lord Jesus has powerful claims on you. You were early dedicated to his name, and cast upon his providence. This hand has poured out upon most of you the symbol consecration to the fear, the love, and the service of God. The oath of his covenant is on your souls. Have your consciences felt the power of its obligation? My ministry, which for more than eleven years I have discharged among you, is at an end; but not so the consequences. The good Lord knows with what fidelity and what success my labors have been attended. The hour is not far distant when I must deliver up my account, and you must deliver up yours. O, to deliver them up with joy! Thou blessed and heavenly Judge, shall I stand before thy seat, charged with any of their blood? Shall they

stand before it, charged with their own? Shall all the offers of thy mercy, all the pathos of thy sufferings, all thine inimitable patience, and all thy marvelous love, have been preached to them in vain? Shall there be any here who does not more certainly turn his back upon the closed doors of this house of prayer, than he does upon the last, lingering offer of thy salvation? The thought is too overwhelming. Pardon me, my friends.—I can no more.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

SERMON XI.

SALVATION BY GRACE

EPHESIANS II. 8.

By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

The apostle Paul was largely indebted to redeeming love; and, like all other debtors to that love, he was so far from being ashamed of the debt, that he thankfully owned the obligation it laid upon him, and exulted in it, as his happiness, his honor, his glory. Fully convinced, that in opposing the gospel of Jesus he ignorantly courted ruin, and rushed with mad precipitation upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, he gratefully commemorates that undeserved, unexpected, undesired grace, which sprung from the highest heavens—arrested him in his career of impiety—unmasked him to himself—revealed to him the Savior. This grace is the affecting and dignified theme which melts his heart—

which elevates his powers, and tunes his tongue to praise. Whenever he mentions the endearing subject, his whole soul dissolves in tenderness; the emotions which heave his holy bosom he communicates in

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."

"'Tis a faithful saying; it is worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners.* I know, by experience, the cheering truth; for he saved me, who am the chief of sinners." Viewing now, from his rock of safety, the darkness, the danger, the death, which environ the unconverted; he sighs for their misery, and ardently covets the honor of being made instrumental in warning them *to flee from the wrath to come.* Far as his voice can be heard —wide as his labors can extend—distant as his writings may reach—he proclaims to perishing men the deadly disease under which they labor, and the remedy which is provided by the covenant, and is offered by the gospel of peace. His invaluable epistles are a comment upon the prophetic declaration, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.* For all the evils which sin has introduced, he directs us to grace, reigning grace, as the sovereign antidote. To abase pride, to confound presumption, to guard against the vortex of error which has sunk into

perdition millions who were caught in its whirl, he solemnly assures us that our own deeds and dispositions, however important or holy *we* may imagine them, have not the least influence, directly or indirectly, in procuring our acceptance with God. *By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* But, to kill despair and quicken hope, he accompanies this alarming doctrine with the reviving intelligence that the *righteousness of God without the law is manifested;* and that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Deeply impressed with the magnitude of this truth, and thoroughly aware of the deceitfulness and power of a legal propensity by which men are inclined to connect, with the work of the Savior, some work of their own, he cautions us against the danger of yielding to its suggestions; he not only urges the caution by the weight of his apostolic authority, but by arguments the most pointed and forceful, he demonstrates that if ever we be saved, our salvation must be of free grace. This precious doctrine the preceding parts of the epistle before us exhibit in a variety of lights; but no where is it asserted in terms more downright and unequivocal than in the words of our text—*By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. it is the gift of God.*

To facilitate the discussion of this subject, it may be proper to state the meaning of the words, *grace, salvation, faith.* *Grace*, evidently denotes *free favor.* It is often confounded with mercy, but it conveys an idea more strong and impressive. *Mercy*, is kindness shown to the *miserable: grace*, is mercy shown to the *worthless.*

Salvation, contemplates its objects as laboring under evil, and exposed to danger. The salvation of the gospel contemplates its objects as *sinners;* as ruined by their own transgression; as condemned by the sentence of a righteous law, and liable to the tremendous penalty which the sentence includes. *Faith*, in its general acceptation, is reliance upon testimony. The faith of a Christian—*that* faith from which he obtains the honorable denomination of a *believer*, is the cordial reception of the record which God hath given of his Son, upon the credit of his *own veracity.* The doctrine then of our text is briefly this, that we receive, by faith of divine operation, the salvation which is provided by grace.

You will not deem a few minutes unprofitably spent in meditating upon the blessing which is here exhibited—upon the source from which it originates—and upon the instrument by which we are instated in the possession of it.

I. The blessing is *salvation:* a blessing of large and joyous extent; implying deliverance from

guilt—reconciliation with God, the restoration of our nature, and a right, an unalienable right, to eternal life.

1. Salvation confers deliverance from guilt. The punishment to which our fallen nature is liable, is commonly styled the penalty of the law—is death, in the widest signification of the word and is the just award of sin; *for the wages of sin is death.* With this death Adam was threatened in case of disobedience, when God enjoined abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as the pledge of his fidelity. Now since he stood in a federative character, and neither the precept nor its sanction was confined to the person of Adam, but embraced, in him, those who should spring from him, it follows, that "all his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." So saith the scripture: *In Adam all die.—By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; and by one offense judgment is come upon all men to condemnation.* Therefore our deplorable condition is, that *we are, by nature, children of wrath.* Born under a broken law, eternal justice attaches our persons, and binds us over to all the evils which the curse of that law contains And

till we become the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, the actions of every day augment our guilt, and in the same proportion our wo. But the salvation of the gospel delivers from the curse. It dissolves forever our connection with the law as a rule of life: it dissolves this connection by bestowing upon us a justifying righteousness: a righteousness in which we are complete; a righteousness, which Jehovah himself will pronounce unblemished; a righteousness not wrought out indeed by ourselves, but by our surety. Our rejoicing is, that Messiah *has magnified the law, and made it honorable*, and therefore that "Jehovah is well pleased for his righteousness' sake," The Father *made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:* and in accomplishing this work, the amazing work, which was given him to do, he has redeemed from the curse of the law, and *forever perfected them who are sanctified.*

God is angry with men, not because they are finite, but because they are wicked. It is sin which renders them the objects of his abhorrence. If, then, a righteousness which provides at once for the safety of the criminal and for the glory of the Lawgiver; which pays to justice her full demand; which repairs the indignity done to the law, blots out every aspersion upon God's character, and vindicates the rights of his go-

vernment: if such a righteousness can be imparted to the sinner, and can be pleaded by him, his guilt is removed, and with it must be removed the Lord's holy displeasure. The gospel-salvation, therefore, in procuring for sinners a justifying righteousness, procures,

2. Reconciliation with an offended God.

The necessity of such a reconciliation has been felt by the consciences, and owned by the practice, of men in every age. This invaluable blessing was typified by all the expiatory sacrifices, and by all the sacerdotal employment, of the Levitical economy. This enviable blessing, Christ, the apostle and high priest of our profession—Christ, the author of eternal redemption, has obtained: he *has made peace by the blood of his cross:* he has *made reconciliation for iniquity:* and *God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* It is in Christ, that the Father considers the heirs of salvation. Accounting the work of Christ as theirs, and the satisfaction of Christ as theirs, he says of them, *they are all fair, there is no spot in them.* This benefit of the covenant, sealed upon the heart by the Spirit of promise, delivers from the terrors and the misgivings of an unappeased conscience, and fills with that divine peace which passeth all understanding. By virtue of this reconciliation, we can view with composure the high demands of the violated law;

we can look forward with confidence to the tribunal of our Judge. The Judge is our friend, who has blotted out, with his own blood, the black and heavy accusation which was marked against us. Thus reconciled, we, *who were once afar off, are brought nigh unto God, and joy in him, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.*

This doctrine of justification and acceptance, by which Christ is declared to do every thing, and we to do nothing, is reprobated by many as encouraging sloth, and promoting immorality. Were it possible, indeed, to be freed from the condemnation of sin, and yet to remain under its power, there can be no doubt that men would be induced to *commit all uncleanness with greediness;* and the doctrine which should assert a deliverance of this kind, would unquestionably lead to licentiousness, and would be supremely execrable; but let it not be forgotten, that, with freedom from guilt and reconciliation to God, is inseparably connected, in the

3d place, The *restoration* of our nature.

God can be pleased with nothing but excellence; and there is no moral excellence but what resembles himself. The restoration, then, of our nature, termed in scripture the being *born again*,—the being *renewed in the spirit of our minds*,—the being *created anew in Christ Jesus*,—consists in the recovery, by Christ the moral

excellence, (the divine image,) which we have lost (lost in Adam). What that excellence (what that image) is, we can be at no loss to determine, when unerring truth has declared that the *new man is, after God, created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.* In *knowledge*, that we may discern the true end of our being; the true source of our happiness; the true value of things temporal and things eternal. In *righteousness;* not that righteousness which justifies the sinner. This is widely different from the righteousness which forms in believers a part of their Father's image. The latter is purchased by the former; the one, that by which we are justified, is a righteousness *imputed;* the other is a righteousness *implanted.* The one is a righteousness *without* us; the other is a righteousness *within* us. The one is absolutely perfect; the other is not, cannot be, perfect, till that which is in part is done away. It is, properly speaking, a *rectitude of nature;* a rectitude which expresses and exerts itself in sanctified acts, and sanctified habits: and these acts and habits are what the apostle terms *true holiness.* Let it not then be wondered at, that they who live under the influence of the belief, that there is, that there can be, *no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus*, are most afraid of sin, and most *adorn in all things the doctrine of God their*

Savior. This fact, (and let men argue as they please, it is a stubborn fact which no ingenuity can explain away,) this fact is an inexplicable riddle to the worldling: but the easy solution of it is, that they have another nature; and holiness is as much the element of the new creature, as sin is the element of the old. The name *Jesus* was given to the Mediator because he *saves his people from their sins.* *Sin*, says the apostle, *sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace:* and *he that is born of God sinneth not, because his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.*

Heaven is the proper abode of innocence and holiness. It is the abode which Christ hath prepared for them who love him. They, therefore, who are delivered by his righteousness from the guilt of sin, whom he has reconciled to God, and whose nature the Spirit of truth has renovated and restored, must enjoy,

4. As a part of their salvation, a sure title to everlasting life.

For these (favored ones) there is reserved in heaven, an *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* This is the record of God, that *he hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He, therefore, who hath the Son, hath eternal life.* Eternal life!

how big the expression! Eternal life! Who can *tell*, who can *think*, its glories? If it is desirable to be forever free from fears and fightings; from sin, and pain, and sorrow—If it be a comfort to have all the graces of the Divine Spirit, which at best can but bud in this cold and frozen clime; to expand in their native soil; to shed the fragrance, and bloom in the beauty of Paradise—If it be pleasant to mingle in familiar society with holy angels and holy men; to admire with them the countless wonders of creation and providence; and the superior wonders of redeeming love—If it be delightful to be honored with the unclouded communion of a triune Jehovah; to have pure streams from the fountain of uncreated joy flowing perpetually into the gladdened soul—If these things can constitute bliss, blessed is the son of adoption; blessed is the heir of Christ; he has eternal life, and eternal life comprehends them all!

If you inquire whence proceeded a salvation so great, so invaluable, so divine? The answer, which brings us directly to the

II. Branch of our subject, is, that it flows from grace, free grace! So saith our apostle, *By* GRACE *are ye saved.* This is the invariable doctrine of the Bible. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory. Not for your*

sakes do I this, O house of Israel, be it known unto you, saith the Lord God, but for my holy name's sake; so that *salvation is of the Lord*, and therefore it is by grace; yes, it is all of grace. It is grace in its *origin;* grace in its *execution;* grace in its *application.*

1. The *origin* of salvation is vainly ascribed to any other cause than free grace.

There is not, in the oracles of God, a point ascertained with more precision, nor corroborated with testimonies more frequent and irrefragable, than this, that electing love is the fountain of salvation. *I will have mercy*, says Jehovah to Moses, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy:* whence our apostle draws the solid and undeniable inference, *So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.* It were easy to accumulate the proofs of this doctrine: but we need go no farther than the first chapter of the epistle from which our text is taken. There we are told, in language which all the efforts of violent criticism cannot torture into any other meaning, that God has chosen us in Christ *before the foundation of the world: having predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will.* 'Tis true, many who are too proud to be indebted for their eternal salvation to the free favor of

God, insist that the election by which he distinguishes sinner from sinner, is grounded upon good disposition, upon faith and holiness foreseen in the objects of that election. But if men be allowed to interpolate divine revelation, and to add to the oracles of Jehovah the figments of their own invention, we may lay aside our Bibles. The fashionable tenet which was just now mentioned, some may deem an ingenious interpretation of the apostle; but sober inquiry will say, that instead of explaining it contradicts him. The apostle asserts that God hath chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy; or which is the same thing, we are holy because he hath chosen us. But the doctrine against which I contend is exactly the reverse, viz. that he hath chosen us because we are holy. Upon whatever principle the election proceed, it will hardly be denied that God chooses men to salvation, and that by Jesus Christ. But if good dispositions, if faith and holiness foreseen, are the cause of election, then sinners are saved before the Lord chooses them: for faith and holiness undoubtedly constitute salvation; and where, upon this plan, where is the obligation to grace? The same plan requires, as a *previous* qualification for receiving Christ, the very thing which is the *effect* of receiving him; for it is the office of Jesus to save his people from

their sins, i. e. beyond controversy to make them holy. Moreover, the apostle roundly affirms, that *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*, and that *they who are in the flesh cannot please God.* But how a man can become holy by accumulating sin, is a point which deserves better elucidation than it has yet received. Salvation, then, originates in grace; and not only so, but,

2. It is grace in its *execution.*

The meritorious executor of the new covenant is the Lord Jesus. And what but grace, large, unbounded grace, could have prompted him to become *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?* To obey, perfectly, as the covenant head of his people, all the precepts of the righteous law? To endure as their substitute, the tremendous evils which are included in its penalty? Infinitely happy and glorious in himself, he needed neither our services, nor ourselves: he might have left us to perish in our willful apostasy, and his justice would have shone in our eternal destruction. Thus he treated the angels who kept not their first estate. But while in the exercise of sovereignty he passed by the angelic nature, in the exercise of the same sovereignty *he took on him the seed of Abraham*, and *made his soul an offering for sin.* The universal Lord, he can suffer no compulsion: and those for whom he interfered had nothing to merit his condescension.

They were not innocent creatures in distress; but thankless, wanton rebels against the God of their mercies; in their crime, without excuse; in their characters, supremely vile. It was, then, free love; it was his voluntary act, by which he entered into covenant with his Father; when, before all worlds, the *counsel of peace was between them both.* In virtue of that counsel, *Lo, I come*, said he, *to do thy will, O God.* In virtue of that counsel, he *laid down his life for the sheep. No man took it from him; but he had power to lay it down, and he had power to take it again; this commandment had he received from his Father.* Well, therefore, might our apostle remind the Corinthians of the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.*

Nor does the grace which reigns in the origin and purchase of salvation, exceed the grace which, in the

3d. Place, we find to characterize its *application.*

By the application of salvation, I mean, that preternatural and supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, by which he creates in (elect) sinners, the temper, and bestows on them the privileges, of God's dear children—privileges which were bought and secured by the unblemished obedi-

ence, and the vicarious suffering, of their Elder Brother. Without deep reflection upon the nature of things, or the experience of every believer, the least veneration for the oracles of God is enough to convince all who are not blinded by the god of this world, that the work of the Holy Spirit, of which we are speaking, is entirely of grace. It is grace in its *commencement;* grace in its *progress;* grace in its *completion.*

To the *commencement* of this work, may be referred all benefits of redemption, which, however different in their *natural order*, take place, in *fact*, at one and the same moment. We can barely mention some of them. One of them is *justification*; and we are *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* Another, is the infusion of *spiritual life. When I passed by thee,* they are the words of Jehovah, *when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, behold, thy time was a time of love: and I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live.* With these we may connect *regeneration, pardon,* and *adoption. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, even the renewing of the Holy Ghost. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for mine own sake*—and in

Christ we have *forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*—and we were *predestinated unto the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will.* And if salvation begin with grace, it must proceed by grace. The apostle tells us that when we are united to Christ, we are made new creatures; one of the first ideas that will occur to the mind when reflecting upon the wants of a living creature, is, that it cannot thrive unless it be properly *fed.* And as the new creature is of heavenly birth and spiritual kind, what food is adapted to its nature, but that which is supplied by the gracious Spirit? It is not the Lord's method to furnish his people with a stock of grace, and then leave it entirely to their good management. Were this the case, like witless prodigals, they would soon squander away not only the earnest of their inheritance, but the inheritance itself. No, he deals with them more tenderly and wisely. It is in spiritual, as it is in temporal life. The food which sustains our nature to-day, was not intended to serve us to-morrow; and therefore it is our duty to be no less mindful of our souls than of our bodies, when we offer up our petition for our daily bread. *The branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine.* It is the fullness of Christ from which we receive *grace for grace.* The advocate whom he hath

promised—the Lord, the sanctifier, dwells in his people as a well of living waters. He purifies their affections; he encourages their hope; he nerves their exertion. From the effect of his mighty working, he is denominated the *Spirit of grace;* and for the same reason, progress in those holy tempers of which he is the immediate author, is called *growth in grace.*

Equally free, equally unmerited, is the completion of our salvation. *He who begins the good work, performs it until the day of Jesus Christ.* He *hath* GIVEN *to us eternal life.* The inheritance of believers is an inheritance already purchased. The full price was paid by their surety, and it is kept, by the faithfulness of God, till they become of age, when they shall enter with exceeding joy, into *the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world.*

As the great salvation is, in all its parts, the offspring of gratuitous bounty, so the manner in which we acquire a property in its benefits, corresponds to its nature. Which leads us to consider, in the

III. Place, the *mean* or *instrument* by which salvation becomes ours. This is *faith. By grace are ye saved,* THROUGH FAITH. Genuine faith, as has been remarked already, is a cordial assent to the testimony of God, and a firm reliance upon his new covenant faithfulness. It views him

as a promising God, and as a God who performs what he promises. Thus *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.* The love of God proposes Christ Jesus as the *propitiation for sin*—as the peace-maker between God and man—as the only foundation of our hope and confidence. We are told that *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* The offer of his salvation is made in style the most tender, and terms the most unlimited: *Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. Behold, I bring near my righteousness.* Eternal Truth has sworn that no sinner, be his character what it may, if he flee to this righteousness, shall ever be rejected. *Him that cometh to me*, saith the Redeemer, *I will in no wise cast out.* "Amen," says the believing soul, with her eye fixed on the exceeding great and precious promises, "it is enough: these are all my salvation, and all my desire. I wish for no other, no better security. Christ is offered to sinners freely and indiscriminately. Here is my ample warrant to receive him: I am a sinner: *I appropriate to myself* the general offer: I take Jesus to be my Savior and portion, and God to be, in him, my covenant God. Henceforward I am not my own, but, bought with a price, I am bound to

serve God with my body and with my spirit which are his." In thus receiving the divine testimony respecting the Redeemer, we set to our seal that God is true. And that he may mark with an indelible stain the pride of all human glory, the apostle takes care to inform us that even this faith by which we embrace the Savior, does not originate in our will; is not effected by our power: *Ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the* GIFT OF GOD. The scripture is decisive on this head. *It is* GIVEN *us to believe in Christ.* It is God who *deals the measure of faith.* It is he who fulfills in his people, *the work of faith with power.*

The subject we have been considering, affords matter for copious and interesting meditation. We shall very briefly improve it, for correcting a very common but destructive error—for inviting the sinner to lay hold on eternal life—and for quickening the believer in his way to glory.

1. We may correct, from what has been said, a common but destructive error. Multitudes who would gladly break down the hedge of distinction which God has planted around his chosen: and reduce them to a level with the carnal world, are fond of the notion, that the faith which constitutes a Christian is but a rational assent to the truth of the gospel. A notion, my brethren, which will ruin eternally the man who

dies under its influence. An assent to historical fact, and to rational proof, is an exercise of the mind, which belongs to us as *intellectual* beings. It is an essential property of a reasonable creature. Destroy this property, and you destroy his very nature. But it is by no means necessarily connected with good moral qualities. And who does not know that it is moral state and character which distinguish the believer from the world? Intellectual powers, *necessarily* belong to us: but the faith of a Christian is not born with him, nor is he born with powers which can produce it: if he were, it could not be a faith of God's operation. A speculative, and a saving faith, are therefore *specifically* different. The difference, and an important one it is, lies here: the one is the fruit of arguments addressed to the understanding *merely*, and may be possessed, in a very high degree, by the devil himself. The other is the proper effect of the sovereign and almighty agency of the Spirit of truth, not only upon the understanding, but upon the heart, and upon the will. And it is the more needful to be decided in this matter, because men, as long as they indulge the idea that they are able to believe at their pleasure, will slumber in security, and dream of bliss, but will not, cannot, be solicitous about salvation by grace. But a free, an absolutely free salvation

is the substance of the gospel. While, therefore, we may properly improve our subject for alarming the fears of men by showing them their utter inability to help themselves, we must not forget to improve it.

2. For encouraging their hope, by inviting them to lay hold on eternal life, through the medium of a gracious salvation. Hear it, and rejoice, ye sons and daughters of Adam: Grace reigns! Her throne is erected on the blood of the atonement; and she proclaims to dying mortals, life and pardon, acceptance, peace, and glory. Her wide commission extends to the most worthless and vile. Before the tribunal of God, all are guilty: and therefore, before the throne of grace all are on a level. At this throne by which we are introduced to the favor of Jehovah, there is no respect of persons. Grace makes not the smallest difference between the rigid pharisee, and the rapacious publican—between the severe moralist, and the abandoned libertine. If she did, she would cease to be grace. Be persuaded, then, wretched sinners, to come to the living God through Jesus Christ. Every difficulty which guilt and defilement can create, is completely removed: for grace reigns. Say not, "I have sinned too long, and too heinously to be forgiven. I dare not—it would be presumption—to hope for acceptance, with a holy

God." The answer to every objection is, Grace reigns! Grace has made ample provision for all your wants. She has provided righteousness for the guilty—purity for the filthy—faith for the unbelieving—repentance for the impenitent—strength for the feeble. The more worthless and impoverished thou art, the fitter subject art thou for the operation of grace. All the mercies of the new covenant, all that Christ purchased, and we can want, she offers without money and without price. While she addresses you in the name of Jesus, listen to her voice, yield to her intreaties. Children of pride, bow the knee to this amiable sovereign! Prisoners of death, touch her friendly sceptre and live! Whosoever *will*, let him take of the water of life *freely*. *I*, says Jesus, *I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

Lastly. Let us improve our subject for quickening the believer in his way to glory.

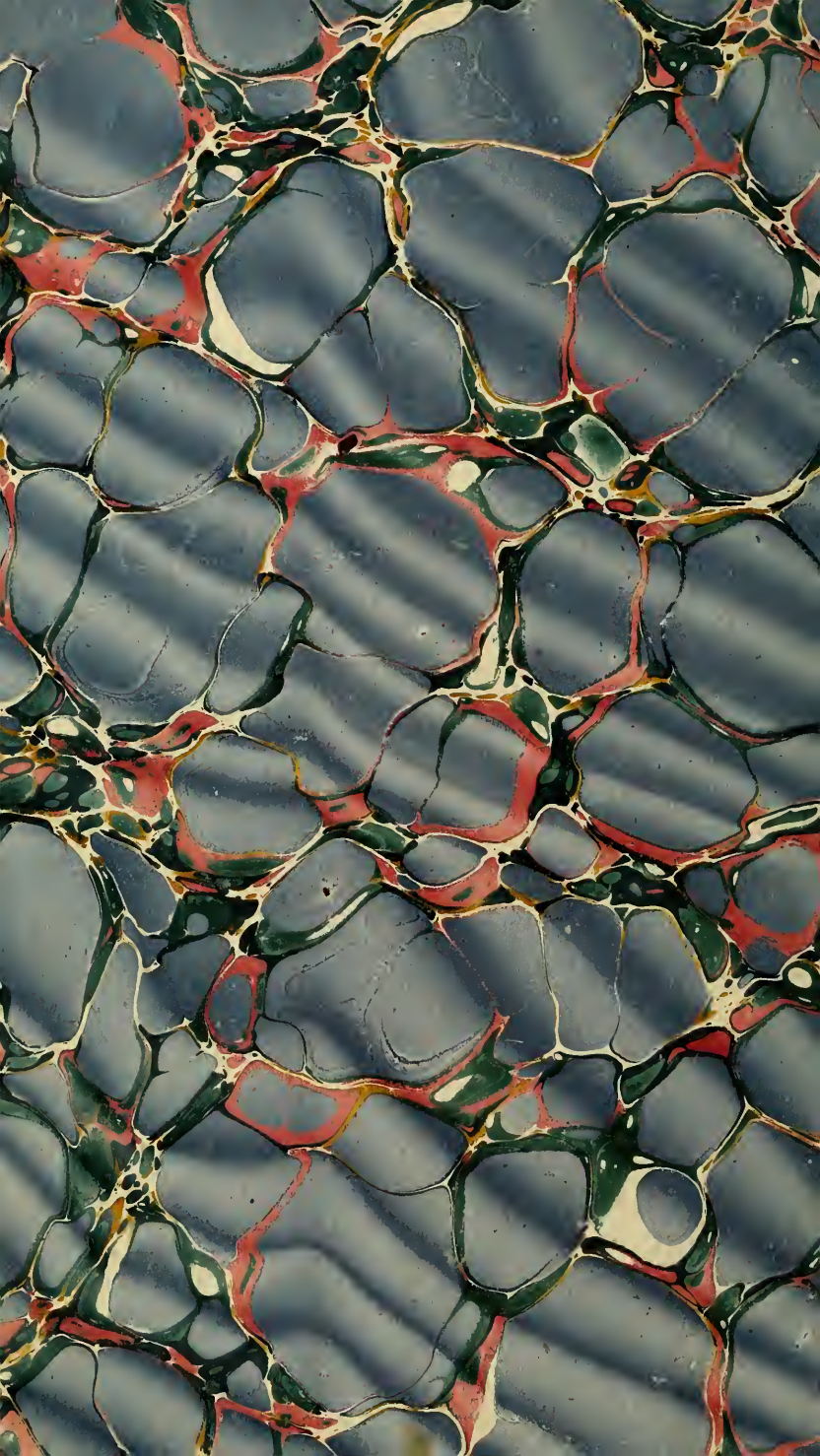
Is salvation by *grace*? then let boasting lips be forever silent. What have we, O Christian, that we have not received? Every thing bad in us, is our *own*: every thing good is the gift of divine bounty. And why did the Lord fix his love upon us, when he has passed others in their iniquity? Were we in any respect better than they? Oh no! We all belonged to the same

lump of perdition. Sovereignty, adorable sovereignty, made us vessels of honor. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Surely, then, it becomes us to be clothed with humility, and gratefully to own our obligations to that love of God which called us from darkness into his marvelous light.

Is the progress of salvation by grace? Why, then, believers, should our hands be weak, or our souls cast down? In every trial, in every danger, our unfailing consolation is, that grace reigns. We are authorized to come boldly to our Father's throne, and to ask at once, with the affection and the confidence of children, for all the benefits which we need. Our Jesus, our brother, has all things at his command. *For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.* As the administrator of the new covenant, he is the treasurer of heaven—and he has promised his people to send down his Spirit, to unlock his storehouse, and unlock their hearts, and pour them full of blessings!

Is salvation completed by grace? Who, then, or what shall hinder the holy warriors that fight under Immanuel's banners, from arriving in triumph at the heavenly Canaan? Did Jesus ransom them by his blood? Did he quicken them by his Spirit? Did he purify them by his grace? Has he given them the pledge of the

promised inheritance? And shall they not persevere? Absurd idea! They shall! Kept by the power of God, they shall go from strength to strength, till every one of them appear before him in Zion. *Let us gird up, therefore, the loins of our faith, and run with patience the race set before us!* Let us look forward, with exultation, to the blissful period when the mystery of God shall be finished. Then the Redeemer shall complete the temple of mercy which was built on his blood, and reared by his Spirit; and every stone of the sacred pile shall bear the motto of redemption—a motto engraved by the finger of God, and emblazoned by the light of heaven, *To the praise of the glory of his grace!*

END OF VOLUME I

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